

Drawing's Finish

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This chapter offers an exploration of some of the more obsessive and meticulous approaches to drawing that result in an extremity of finish. Weighted with time, complex working methods and illusionism, the discussion touches upon the hidden difficulties of conveying an effortless finish, and the influence of working from photographic media. It looks at certain practices that have operated against prevailing trends within conceptual art, specifically the work of Vija Celmins (born 1938, Latvia) and Ed Ruscha (born 1937, United States), who rearticulated drawing's terms for deskilling and dematerialization in the 1960s. This chapter asks, via Ruscha and Celmins, if it is possible to find something productive in the relatively unexamined encounter between illusionism and conceptualism. Their concerns have an urgency and relevancy for artists working with photo-mimetic forms of drawing in the present moment, a diverse field from which I will focus on the Glasgow-based artist Kate Davis (born 1977, New Zealand).¹ I want to think about whether an engagement with finish as a material factor can extend into the conceptualization of a new, post-photographic ground for drawing, involving questions of temporality and skillfulness.

My definition and use of "finish" as a term is specific to those occasions where the artist's touch is so skilled in its photographic verisimilitude as to be a barely perceptible intervention in the image. In positioning Ed Ruscha and Vija Celmins's work of the mid-1960s as a productive confrontation between drawing and photography, this chapter will articulate how their focus on finish enables drawing to operate both as a medium and as media within these artists' complex responses to the apparently deskilled, data-focused trajectory of conceptual art.

The shifting of the image, from visibility to invisibility and back again, which unfolds across the wider currents of 1960s art production, offers a productive model for the shifting place of the image within drawing itself. Often it is only the bare bones of a solipsistic enactment of "process" that is rendered as content, whereas I

am concerned with those instances where the “image” is an insistent presence, actually *withholding* an overt exemplification of process in search of a different enactment of temporality, often in the service of what I term illusionistic drawing. Even a figure such as Sol LeWitt “confessed” in 1969 that: “It’s impossible, I think, to do anything to avoid illusion. Illusion is a function of perception. Everyone has their own perception” (Alberro and Norvell 2001, p. 115). This is to say that I am concerned with the hand’s near-invisible exertions, operating via a mode of intense, all-over visuality that underscores the hidden difficulties of conveying an effortless finish. These drawings are worked up as opposed to working. Demanding a different type of looking from that which we often associate with the 1960s, this drawing is not immediately definable as deadpan or entropic, rather it is involved, prolonged and engaged: a differentiated state that seeks to destabilize the opposition of detachment and intimacy.

Ed Ruscha’s labor-intensive finished drawings of the 1960s paradoxically capture the look of the advertising instant. His encounter with the medium of drawing in this decade is knowingly staged, suggesting the content, at first glance, to operate as near throwaway one-liners. This can be understood as the manifestation of a localized and capricious kind of fiction within drawing, securely tied to the Los Angeles milieu of the artist and his work. Ruscha’s work of the early 1960s represents a constitutive moment in the breaking down of boundaries between abstraction and figuration. The scholarship on Ruscha’s early pop-pigeonholed works from the first half of the 1960s already exists and is extensive, as is true for his career as a whole.² Being an established and visible figure during the 1960s, he created in his wake an environment in which artists like Vija Celmins were able to flourish in the Los Angeles art scene, reconfiguring and expanding the plurality of west coast pop through their alternative iterations. As the 1960s progressed, Ruscha began to produce work across a range of mediums, most emblematically his important series of photo-books begun in 1963, resulting in an artistic multifariousness that continues to the present day.

Given the primary role that the photo-books play in Ruscha’s practice, not to mention their dominance within the critical reception of the artist’s work, we should not underestimate the extent to which photography governs his paper surfaces. Bearing this in mind, it is perhaps helpful to begin from the premise that his drawing *learns* from these distanced and detached photographic productions. Such crosscurrents should be thought of as the *non-drawing* modality of the artist’s practice: that which enables his drawing to be both polluted and precise within the media landscape. It is also important to remember that while temporally and technically very different, the drawings and photo-books are nevertheless linked by what Ruscha described as “a professional polish, a clear-cut machine finish” (Coplans 1965; Schwartz 2004, p. 27). Taking on board this explicitly machinic quality, I want to push further the “professional” aspect he mentions. The architectural critic Reyner Banham made the following observation after a studio visit with Ruscha in the 1970s:

In his studio – where the only thing set up on an easel is an enormous mirror, reflecting the contents of the room with fanatical exactitude – *he is a real, hundred-per-cent professional* [my emphasis]. ... Whatever Ed fanatically scrutinizes and fastidiously selects is delivered, visually, with fetching exactitude and impeccable technical quality. Los Angeles is a city of unplumbed proficiency, and Ed is in deep. (Banham 1975, unpaginated [2,4])

Banham deliberately twins Ruscha's professional, almost slick, conduct with the proficiency he sees as native to Los Angeles, a discipline grounded in place that runs counter to the city's "slack soft" stereotype (Meyer 2004, p. 33).³ While Banham's love of LA was famously extreme, this doesn't undermine his careful reading of Ruscha's role as an artist in the city. By focusing on his ability to deliver a certain level of "technical quality" and professionalism, Banham reminds us that the private space of the studio is in constant dialogue with the public realm, toward which the work is oriented (much like the commercial spheres of advertising design and Hollywood filmmaking).

It is worthwhile thinking about the wider context for this technical dialogue between drawing and photography: the renegotiation of conceptualism's terms for drawing.⁴ Ruscha's drawing represents an aberrant, disobedient conceptual strand, where in concord with LeWitt's "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969), idea is prioritized over object, except that in this case the idea is a trickier proposition, absolutely reliant on its physical execution, its exposition made distanced and strange, while being rendered at a high resolution.⁵ Consider Philip Guston's reason for his departure from abstraction in 1968: "I got sick and tired of all that Purity! Wanted to tell Stories" (Berkson 1970, p. 44). This type of drive can be linked to the various media inflections of both Ruscha and Celmins's drawing practices. Avoiding inward-looking subjectivism or automatic gestures, their drawings retool pop or minimalist removals of the artist's hand. Drawing as sited in the media world is caught between the slow processes and fast dynamics of production – its convoluted temporality can be seen from both angles. This tension foreshadows Kate Davis's selection of cheap, mass-produced postcards (rather than the priceless artworks they depict) as the subject matter for her monumental, photo-uncanny still life drawings.

Ed Ruscha produced a great concentration of drawing in the short period between 1965 and 1968. In setting out the stakes of this analysis, I want to synthesize some questions that arise from the proposal that drawing can equally and simultaneously be considered as a medium and as media. Acknowledging the huge amount of non-drawing in Ruscha's practice only helps to underscore the intermedia framework on which this reading of finish relies. Ruscha's works on paper of the mid- to late-1960s speak to the question of what drawing can continue to mean in a media culture saturated with photographic and cinematic images. What happens when drawing as a medium would seem to have had the very ground pulled from under it? I claim that Ruscha's response to this screen image proliferation is to develop his drawing practice based upon paper's capacity for imaginative experimentation, its mirroring and modeling of other media and materials, and that by doing so he recognizes the limits of representation and communication. His work of the 1960s is inclined to self-reflexivity in the matter of mediality and materiality: drawing's place in the world is interrogated, and subsequently strengthened. Ruscha's studio is equally graphic, photographic and reprographic in nature, and this intrinsically intermedia alignment of his practice means that drawing is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere in this artist's work. This acute ambivalence in turns reflects the everyday artifice of a specifically cinematic urban space – Los Angeles.

As Charles Desmarais incisively notes:

The art of photography as we now understand it was, to all intents and purposes, invented during the late 1960s in California... The 1960s was, famously, a decade that put trust in institutions, even experience, under extreme stress... In Southern

California, where the local “industry” is a structure for manufacturing and trading in images – the illusion of reality promoted by the photograph came under particular scrutiny. (Desmarais 2011, p. 81)

This establishes some of the ground for my own argument, which builds upon this base of illusions and constructs in order to articulate Ruscha’s renegotiation of drawing as a response to an image-saturated mediascape and its industries of masking and manufacture. It is interesting to observe, after noting this condition of image saturation, the corresponding lack of color in Ruscha’s graphite and later gunpowder drawings, beginning in the mid-1960s (mirroring Celmins’s achromatic palette of the same period), which represent such a major shift from the block primary colors of his earlier paintings like *Actual Size* (1962). This leeching of chroma leaves a drawing landscape populated by so many ghostly shadows; a dramatic use of light and dark being a long-term preoccupation of his painting practice, too.⁶ The works on paper appear like after-effects, again raising the specter of photography and its integration within the equivalent flat and papery plane of drawing. As Margit Rowell observes: “Light sculpts and defines Ruscha’s silhouettes (curiously, there is little linear incident in his drawings)” (Rowell 2004, p. 19).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Michael Auping reveals, “Ruscha drove around Southern California with a notebook and camera. ‘I would give myself assignments,’ he recalls. ‘At first, I think it was partially about just learning the city, and then they just became independent projects’” (Auping 2011, p. 24). One result was a series of 10 graphite drawings based on a selection of photographs from Ruscha’s third published book, *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965). The images record specific locations, despite the fact that these places seem inherently interchangeable and passively generic. In spite of the careful listing of their addresses or building names as the works’ titles, this placelessness is a seeping presence, disrupting any attempts at geographic usefulness. Ruscha’s “assignment” was a meandering, fairly random drive across town that led him to photograph and then produce drawings of these particular apartment complexes: they are not suffused with personalized meaning, but neither are they the empty beacons of an ironic, posturing stance.

These drawings affirm the artifice of the everyday, or the artificiality contained by banality: a duality in collapse that structures my reading of Ruscha’s drawing. The startling quality of replication achieved by these works is not driven by representing reality or creating a direct equivalent of it. They are the most significant precursors to the artist’s more sustained series of “ribbon word” drawings in gunpowder begun two years later, by which I mean that they most rigorously explore the problematic of drawing not as sketch but as ultra-finished depictive ground. It is important to stress that Ruscha’s relationship to photography, unlike Celmins’, is not wholly based on the taking of personal snapshots and the collecting of clippings, but rather is intimately linked to photography’s functional integration within graphic design, magazine layouts and the world of commercial publishing. Indeed, we should take seriously Ruscha’s claim, made in a 1965 interview with John Coplans, that “photography is dead as a fine art; its only place is in the commercial world, for technical or information purposes” (Coplans 1965, p. 23). The media inflection of Ruscha’s drawing c.1965 can potentially be understood as a response to photography’s exhaustion as a fine art medium. “Post-photographic” drawing in this context could therefore mean drawing that comes after and responds to the repositioning of photography at the culmination

of its fine art credibility, to become an integral component in the articulation of conceptual art. If photography's only place is in the commercial world, as Ruscha insisted in 1965, then his drawing seems to act as its distorted mirror image, absorbing its technical properties and deathly stillness.

In 1965 Ruscha also began doing layouts for *Artforum* magazine, at that time still based in Los Angeles. Their offices were on La Cienega Boulevard directly above the Ferus Gallery, who represented Ruscha and had given him three solo shows since 1962. The October 1965 issue of *Artforum* is the first to list Ruscha's pseudonym "Eddie Russia" under the masthead's production credits. The physical proximity of Ruscha's two careers as fine artist and graphic designer should not be underestimated when considering the place of drawing (and the conceptual-material role of its finish) within his larger oeuvre.⁷ The precepts of graphic design unquestionably shaped the role drawing was to play in his work, with the vernaculars of advertising and magazine publishing assimilated into the cool finish effects of his near-invisible drawing touch.

In the catalogue for the Whitney Museum's 2004 exhibition of the artist's photography, Sylvia Wolf writes:

When Ruscha uses a photograph as a source material, the picture is a point of departure and the final product is often thoroughly *transformed* [my emphasis]. This is particularly true of a suite of graphite drawings he made in 1965 from photographs in the book *Some Los Angeles Apartments*. Ruscha did not intend to draw the photographs. "No, I think that was just nervous energy." With the aid of an opaque projector, Ruscha traced the photographs, removing information and softening details in the final drawings. (Wolf 2004, p. 233)

Ruscha's use of an opaque projector is a technical process similar to the enlargement of photographic negatives. It is an enlarging tool that relies on a bright lamp to display opaque materials (a photographic print in this case), by shining the lamp onto the object from above and projecting its reflected light. Indeed, the removal of information that occurs in this act of drawing by transfer recalls the pivotal processing scene in Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 film *Blow-Up*, where instead of revealing the "truth" of Thomas's photographic encounter (i.e. the presence of a dead body in the park), the multiple enlargements performed on the photograph singularly fail to provide concrete confirmation. The visual information the protagonist so deeply desires to see only dissipates further, during what he hopes will be a gradual, and unequivocal, process of revelation.

Matilde Nardelli has perceptively analyzed this complex interplay between photographic reality and fiction/abstraction that lies at the heart of *Blow-Up*, pointing to the serial layout of the prints in the processing scene, which is marked by "temporal ellipsis," suggesting that the film highlights photography's:

... inherent opacity and indeterminacy. As critics have often noted, the motif of the progressive enlargements draws attention to how photography may ultimately obscure or even "lose" the real, rather than help its capture and disclosure. As image yields to grain, the reality *in* photography "disappear[s] into a general atomic welter," delivering not "truth" but "the *diffusion* of truth into surface" ... (Nardelli 2011, p. 187)

This foregrounding of granularity is key: with the inherent materiality of the analogue film print acting as a barrier to “objective reality,” its granular space of abstracted particles indulges in a surface obfuscation not normally associated with photography’s supposedly direct and instantaneous equivalency, which is to say, its indexicality.

In Ruscha’s *Thayer Avenue* drawing (1965, Figure 16.1), the basic features of the building are depicted carefully and evenly, and yet everything is smoothed out so rigorously as to seem otherworldly: as if the combination of microscopic attention and information drop-out (drawing as subtracting and abstracting, via the opaque projector) produces a kind of facsimile visual field. Even the modest landscaping in front of the apartment complex looks under the searing Californian sun less like a group of plants and more like fossilized specimens, desiccated and archaic, or indeed silhouettes, paper-thin cut outs, registering no mass or volume.

Wolf uses the word “transformed” when talking about the apartment drawings as the “final product” of a shift in media; phrasing that suggests a linear continuum from photograph to artist’s book to graphite work on paper. In certain cases, the drawing is not a direct and faithful trace of the entire photographic image but rather seems to take on the job of cropping from photography itself, moving that task into the realm of drawing: a technical shift. *Thayer Avenue*’s receding side elevation is exaggeratedly elongated in comparison to its slightly stubby quality in the source photograph, *1850 S. Thayer Ave.* from *Some Los Angeles Apartments*. This is possibly a direct result of his working method, projecting the photographic image at an angle onto the paper (a technique which is also explored in later paintings by Ruscha). This elongation contrasts with the curtailed front façade in the new, or rather “redrawn” version of the building. It seems as if the drawings’ viewpoints are given room to be slightly yet

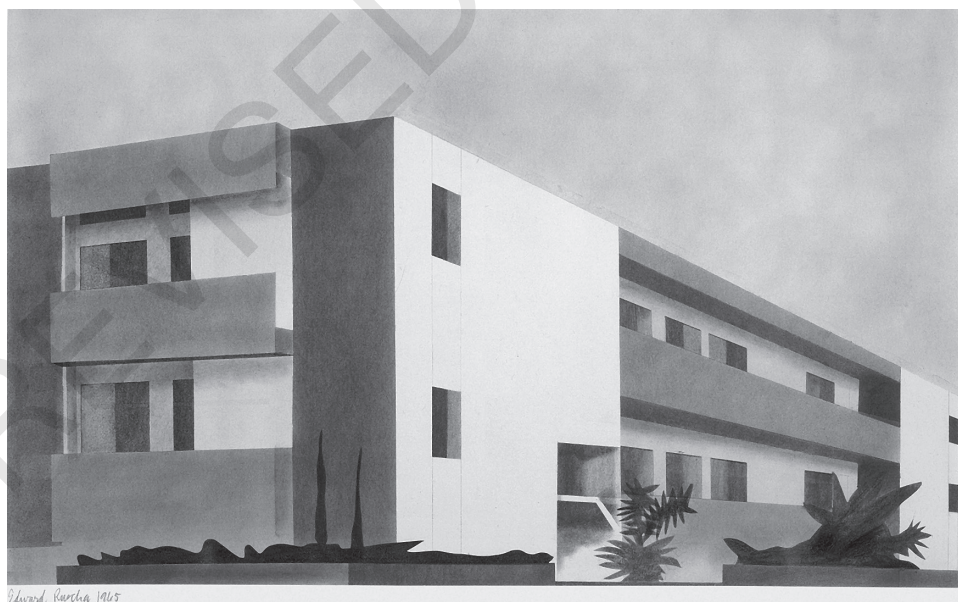


FIGURE 16.1 Ed Ruscha (1965), *Thayer Avenue*. Graphite and pencil on paper mounted on paper; 14×22–5/8 in. Source: © Ed Ruscha. Reproduced by permission of the Artist and Gagosian Gallery.

intrinsically different to the photographs'. In her analysis of *Blow-Up* Nardelli does indeed stress that the sequential enlargements so frantically produced by Thomas are a confirmation that, in photography, "the very processes which should produce a copy, yield difference: reproduction does not suspend or sidestep, but rather generates and sponsors, difference" (Nardelli 2011, p. 202). Adhering to Nardelli's replica-differential, then, the apartment drawings are equivalents and they are also alternatives, rather than the final products of a linear process of pure and direct translation.

On the apartment series Ruscha has commented: "I've always done things that are soft and powdery. These drawings helped me in the direction of completing finished drawings" (Schwartz 2004, p. 292). This clearly indicates that, for Ruscha, the achievement of a drawing considered "finished" was a highly desirable goal during this period. In contrast to the diagrammatic, installation, and working drawings of the 1960s and 1970s that have received much critical attention, the idea of the finished drawing (together with its attendant "questionable notion of manual dexterity," as Mel Bochner put it) has been routinely overlooked (Bochner 2008, p. 61).⁸

By complicating the well-established theorization of drawing as prototype (in the 1960s, the guise "the preparatory" took), and overstepping the dividing lines between pop, minimalism, and the beginnings of conceptual art, the field opens up to works that fail to "fit," considering those instances in which difficulty, skill, and discipline structure drawing; in which depiction (rather than abstraction) presents a tightly layered structure that both facilitates and resists straightforward illusionism. What does it mean to be dexterous in drawing, at this apparent moment of deskilling? It could be a kind of "efficient" dexterity, focused on the diagrammatic language of industry and design, or it could represent an almost esoteric turn away from dominant modalities of deskilling.

For some context, we can look to the critic Peter Plagens, writing in 1969 on "The Possibilities of Drawing," where he claimed that drawing "as exhibition material, and as a subject for art writing" lagged behind sculpture and painting, and that "drawing has been looked upon by even progressive critics and museum people as a skill" (Plagens 1969, p. 50). Plagens's assessment gives a good impression of drawing's status at this time: even in the putatively advanced criticism of *Artforum* the lingering taint of "skill" has to be addressed and maneuvered around. He is in all likelihood referring to a certain kind of drawing that would have been associated with "the academy," that is to say, technically adept procedurals such as life drawing and other forms of art school training, which were seen as dry husks of preparatory artistic practice with no relation to the claimed radicalism of America's neo-avant-gardes. This suggests that, as late as 1969, the notion of skill as a troubling and potentially self-canceling aspect of drawing remained embedded in the understanding of it as a medium. I would argue that Ruscha retrieves skill from such a fate by offering it an aspect of mechanical design: a media-inflected quality of information dropout that is machine-tooled in its editorial precision.

Ruscha's emphasis on his drawings' finish, not in a gestural, painterly sense but via the "soft and powdery" state specified by the artist, results in the effacement of all human trace (aided by the tools of masking tape, ruler, cotton buds and the opaque projector). All effort, all technical difficulties, are made to vanish, seamlessly, from this meticulous finish. I would suggest that this embrace of finish in part accounts for the drawings' sensation of oppressive strangeness. There is a confusing interdependency

of reality and artifice at the core of these photographically assisted representations, as captured by the medium of drawing.

Ruscha's apartments and their environs have the stiff, artificial appearance of stage sets, as if somewhere along the path from photograph to drawing the buildings' material reality was waylaid and a strange mock-up put in place, brightly lit as if reflecting the glow of some artificial light source. The luminous, light-creating finish of the drawings relies on the materials used. Graphite can be a pearlescent, often reflective substance, especially when built up in layers on a hot press paper stock as done here. Ruscha himself has discussed the relative qualities of graphite and gunpowder, which he was soon to move to, declaring graphite to be a "shinier" and more "time-consuming" material (Schwartz 2004, p. 156). This feature links Ruscha's graphite drawing to one of the prominent artistic currents of mid-1960s Los Angeles. As Cécile Whiting writes:

Reflective surfaces characterized the work of a group of artists alternatively labeled Finish Fetish, Hard-Edge, or L.A. Cool. Beginning around 1965 a slew of major exhibitions and significant articles shone a bright spotlight on these artists for exploiting new materials – fiberglass, Plexiglas, polyester resin, acrylics – to form sleek, gleaming surfaces with radiant optical effects... (Whiting 2006, pp. 57–58)

This grouping of artists, including Larry Bell, Billy Al Bengston, Judy Gerowitz (later Chicago), Craig Kauffman and Kenneth Price, coalesced around Venice, California. The critic John Coplans coined the phrase "fetish finish" in 1964 (later inverted to become "finish fetish") to designate their closeness to the esthetics of LA's custom car design merchants, the "hot rod" phenomenon, as well as their interest in working with new plastics such as polyester resin, and the smooth, ultra-lacquered finish of their painting and sculpture, often achieved using industrial spray paints and guns (Coplans 1964, p. 40). This was an art, as the British artist Edward Allington wrote, based on "phenomenological and perceptual issues," the allure of surface finish and the play of light upon it, and it has until recently been viewed pejoratively in comparison to the east coast's concurrent minimalism (Allington 1998). As Andrew Perchuk commented in a roundtable dedicated to re-examining art in LA: "I think that ... LA artists saw a lot of idealism in New York Minimalism, and that the supposedly perfect surfaces of LA art were necessary if you wanted people to attend to the actual conditions they were experiencing" (Perchuk 2011, p. 247). This foregrounding of surface, and the fundamental role Perchuk assigns it in the realization of an experiential and phenomenological materiality, is worth highlighting as an important context for the development of Ruscha's drawing finish, while also helping to differentiate his work from Finish Fetish. In comparison to the slow release of Ruscha's distanced and self-contained greyscale grounds of paper precision, the perfect veneers of Finish Fetish were in a sense emblematic of the works' immediacy of affect and effect.

Ruscha's approach to smooth, traceless drawing eschews the indexing of touch for a kind of industrialized impermeability I am keen to delineate. An industrial typology of drawing internalizes a processual rhythm that is more machinic than led by the hand. Here drawing in its intermedia plurality mimics the material processes of heavy industry: it is tested, perfected, repeated. Why would drawing in a state of perfected industrial finish be of critical interest at this point in time? It recognizes the shifting (yet nonetheless assertive) place of drawing within a larger matrix of production and

consumption in 1960s America – the vapors of late capitalism that Ruscha so effortlessly absorbs and reconstitutes. Working from this late-capitalist subject position, even the most unique and self-determined of objects (a drawing), fails to escape the machinations of product perfection.

While there is obviously also a basic friction at the core of any comparison between graphite powder and the kind of cutting-edge industrial materials deployed by the Finish Fetish artists, I want to propose that the roots of this shared “reflective” and “radiant” esthetic can be situated, post-photographically, in Hollywood cinematography. In Ruscha’s case, the space of drawing becomes a stage set, or a well-lit photography studio, twisting traditional medium and genre categories to produce uncertain and unreal effects. Utilizing this post-photographic esthetic grounded in the paper ephemera of the studio, Ruscha’s drawing of the 1960s looks to paper as a base for both structure and content; its status as a site of experimentation paradoxically reveals the process-led materiality of these sealed and distant works. The ground of drawing is once again the subject of drawing: a circular reinforcement in which the aspects of hyper-finish, skill, temporality, and pictographic iconicity perch drawing precariously on the edge of dissolution: the endless “becoming” of “drawing through process” is here transformed into a series of potential “ends” (Butler 1999).

These drawings are as precise and planned as those of contemporaneous east coast artists such as Bochner, LeWitt, and Smithson, who likewise spoke the language of graphic design and manufacturing industries. It is important to recognize, beneath the obvious differences, their shared embrace of rigorous planning and precise execution; nevertheless, as Cornelia Butler has emphasized, Ruscha is fundamental to the establishment of an alternative framework for drawing at this time. The interplay of design functionality, the tropes of photorealism, and his lush visual style confidently undercuts the severity and expediency of much east coast drawing. Ruscha’s (and equally Celmins’) drawing practice engages with the medium’s traditions and histories, which are played upon, subverted, and teased out into an ambiguously conceptual realm.

The central role that ambiguity plays within a conceptual articulation of drawing’s finish leads us to Vija Celmins’s paper ephemera series. It includes the work *Hiroshima* (1968, Figure 16.2), which meticulously renders a small photographic image of the Japanese city devastated by the atomic bomb of 6 August 1945. Celmins cultivates the associations between drawing, photography, and the printed papers common to historical representations of trompe l’oeil. In her concentration on the tiny minutiae of her paper sources’ dog-eared qualities, she amplifies the small-scale geographies of drawing using apparently touchless illusionism. This drawing – and the series as whole – emphatically does not represent a regressive return to figurative content at the moment of post-minimal and process art’s emergence. It instead offers up drawing’s newly conceptual relationship to a papery mode of trompe l’oeil, wherein this illusory world serves not to reinforce drawing’s relationship to reality but rather to undermine it. I am interested in how certain artists of the 1960s – and within our contemporary moment – latched onto this potentially destabilizing schema. Indeed, Susan Siegfried writes of trompe l’oeil that “it remains an unusually closed and self-referential system of representation” (Siegfried 1992, p. 28). For Celmins, photography is the catalyst that generates a profound shift in her drawing, but it is trompe l’oeil’s historically prominent category of paper ephemera that focuses Celmins’s attention on the ground of drawing, and the possibilities contained by its finish.



FIGURE 16.2 Vija Celmins (1968) *Hiroshima*. Graphite on acrylic ground on paper; 34.5 × 45.5 cm. Source: © Vija Celmins, reproduced by permission the artist and Matthew Marks Gallery.

Realism is a term that sits uneasily with Celmins's work, so many times has her subject matter been removed from any sort of reality and distorted through lenses and reproductions. Nevertheless, hers is fundamentally an image-based, photographically assisted practice. In *Hiroshima* and related drawings, Celmins cites the trope of trompe l'oeil to a degree not seen in any of her works either before or after this particularly pivotal group. In their careful articulation of paper-photo fragments these works recall the late nineteenth-century American trompe l'oeil subject matter of the artist's noticeboard and its arrangements of clipped paper ephemera. William Harnett's *Artist's Card Rack* (1879) is a key example, and a painting that Celmins may have had some awareness of.⁹ It is certainly true that in Celmins's clippings series trompe l'oeil is registered by the smallest of intervals, recording flatness upon flatness, only the barest hint of three dimensions. Once again, this represents the disobedient side of drawing in the 1960s: the unstable ground of ambiguously overdeveloped draughtsmanship that cannot be solely reduced to descriptive, duplicative, or explanatory impulses. In this manifestation, visual deception is not so much a straightforward "trick of the eye" as it is a disruption or deception that takes place upon the very ground of drawing itself. In this split, the always-unstable relationship between drawing and photography is here made schismatic. What are the consequences for the medium of drawing when, as witnessed in *Hiroshima*, it stands so carefully in the cast shadow of photography? In this paper landscape we witness a graphic photo-replication: Celmins's entry into the terrain of post-photographic drawing. It is equally an

affirmation that drawing's unstable temporality is as stratified as the layered time of archeology. The slow time of archeology creates ground through a process of stratification: this is a useful analogy for the labored and polished ground of drawing – heavy with time slowly accrued, and heavy with a materiality both invested in the body and constantly breaking away from it. Heavy lines indicating pressure wrought by the artist's hand over and on top of the sheet of paper are absent here; nevertheless, the paper has been subject to a great deal of looking, examination, time, and effort – it has possibly even absorbed these things. There is a smooth, gliding-over of paper, not a marking of the surface, nor a disruption of it, but rather the creation of tightly compacted secondary and even tertiary grounds, as inaugurated by Celmins' use of preparatory acrylic grounds. It is an excess of detail (in contrast to Ruscha's editing out of specific detail) that keeps the artist crawling over the surface of the image, despite the preparative depth of her grounds.¹⁰ The paper ephemera drawings recreate the image of the thing, rather than the thing itself (like Magritte's pipe/not-pipe, and in full adherence of the code of *trompe l'oeil*).

The critical terminology for *Hiroshima*'s shadowy realm of illusionism needs careful thought. My take on Celmins' tentative illusion reads it more as a quasi-mimetic cloaking device than a desire to inform an image *persuasively* with depth, verisimilitude, or any other hallmark of "reality," which is manifestly not the goal of her work. Rather than embodying any one definition of illusionism, or any specific derivative of it, the late 1960s drawings of Celmins are more aligned with a kind of self-effacing and self-renewing palimpsest model (taking cues from the example of Jasper Johns's encaustics). In such a model, the slow time of still life overlays *trompe l'oeil*, which in turn overlays paper-processed illusion. Together with undefined depth and flattened perspective, we can discern references to photographic tropes and the suggestion of cinematic space. These are all conjured up while at the same time the drawings themselves remain enigmatic. As Norman Bryson has claimed, the "veiled threat of *trompe l'oeil* is always the annihilation of the individual viewing subject as universal center" (Bryson 1990, p. 144). This is a radical reorientation of subject/object relations, proposing a model of fractured facture and plurality that helps to recast the often oversimplified viewing subject of and for drawing. And if it is a confusion and conjunction of flatness and space that is of paramount concern to Celmins' drawing at this point, then we are in fact contending with an illusionism entirely without intention; an achromatic version of *trompe l'oeil* that carefully inhabits the greyscale of the print culture it mimics, while referring back to the historical *trompe l'oeil* tradition of providing "grisaille models for engravers" (Siegfried 1992, p. 27). In Susan Siegfried's important essay on the subject she notes that: "As a rule, *trompe l'oeil* paintings depict still, dead things, and shy away from people and events, since representing the movement and temporality of living things threatens to compromise the illusion" (Siegfried 1992, p. 27). This chimes with Celmins' revealing observation that the "photograph always seemed to me kind of dead" (Sollins 2003, p. 162).

It is worthwhile recalling here something written by Gerhard Richter around 1964, just a few years before Celmins embarked on her clippings series: "When I paint from a photograph, conscious thinking is eliminated. I don't know what I'm doing. [...] The photograph has an abstraction of its own, which is not easy to see through" (Richter 1995, p. 30). This important reminder of the abstraction inbuilt in the putatively representational photographic object helps to illuminate Celmins' own interest in photography, not as a separate category, but rather as a method to unlock a mode

of seeing that disrupts conventional observation (and overrides conscious strategy, in favor of skillful mechanization). It almost goes without saying that Celmins' intentions are not wholly analogous to historical trompe l'oeil; nevertheless, what this history can offer our understanding of her drawing work should not be dismissed. Hanneke Grootenboer's examination of seventeenth-century easel trompe l'oeils contains a suggestion to consider "the trompe l'oeil as an emblem of blindness within the act of looking" (Grootenboer 2006, p. 48). Such a reminder of this physiological aspect is important, in that it reconnects the distanced and "dead" sphere of trompe l'oeil with the body, while echoing Richter's claim that the "abstraction" of the photograph is "not easy to see through."

Trompe l'oeil's struggle for duplication surpasses mere resemblance to aim for a level of fidelity that actually begins to appear unreal: delusion segues into doubt, as once more subjective analysis fails to delineate the contours of reality. And so, although the technical category of trompe l'oeil is perhaps only partially at stake in Celmins' *Hiroshima* and her other works in this series, that initial glimpse, of a photographic image torn from a magazine or newspaper, so convincingly rendered, is persuasive enough to provoke a double take, to prompt a desire to look closer, to study the construction of a drawing that appears as an "image not made by human hands" (Newman 2003, p. 105). There is a moment where you suspend belief, not quite believing the drawn reality of the image as it appears. Jean Baudrillard's revelatory essay on trompe l'oeil further unravels this problematic knot:

In trompe l'oeil it is never a matter of confusion with the real: what is important is the production of a simulacrum in full consciousness of the game and of the artifice by miming the third dimension ... throwing radical doubt on the principle of reality. (Baudrillard 1988, p. 58)

Baudrillard's idea of "radical doubt" is surely useful here, lending weight to the notion that trompe l'oeil's doubt erodes the contours of any analytically verifiable "reality." It is simply no longer a fully assured "principle," as Baudrillard insists. Celmins' drawings produce a sliver of space in which it becomes possible to consider representational drawing that breaks free of reality-depiction. "Radical doubt," understood as a product of duplication at the point of artifice and disintegration, initially seems a concept ill-suited to the assurance of these works. Yet, this unfolding of uncertainty allows for greater consideration of the drawings' relationship to the objects they so convincingly depict using the greyscale of graphite and the ground of paper. This reveals the point at which finish begins to undermine its own commitment to perfection or completion, one consequence of drawing standing so utterly in the shadow of photography. The emphasis here is on the specifics of drawing while acknowledging the results of its ingrained hybridity – in this case a photographic hybridity. "Radical doubt" is where drawing's illusionism *does* matter, where it connects to the wider idea of drawing as thinking: a deconstructive operation that speaks to and within different aspects of the medium, in order to push at the very edges of what drawing is able to do. In this context the importance of Celmins' skill and traceless finish is not related to mastery; rather, they produce an undoing of subject/object relations that emerges from a small space of compression and difficulty. The insistence on the image in Celmins' practice counters the 1960s narrative of drawing's flight into despecification and immateriality, and it is this insistence, together with her

ability to explore finish as a material factor, that leads her work to such a space of productive uncertainty.

Whether the drawing presents us with a city scene of post-nuclear devastation, mushroom cloud, or a falling fighter plane, Celmins' images throughout this series are almost uniformly violent or devastating, using media representations of real events as deeply resonant source material, but never commenting on the subject matter explicitly. Cécile Whiting has observed that "the nuclear disarmament project of the 1960s linked the destruction of the past [of WWII] with the potential nuclear threat of the future" (Whiting 2009). This temporal elision, collapsing the distance between two moments in time so that their echoes and replays are foregrounded, underscores the shifting temporality of drawing's finish itself. Even more pointedly, Whiting recognizes that in these universally "violent" subject matters:

Celmins stills not only the moment of violence, but also the flow of information about the violent event. The [clippings] drawings refer to the print media that circulated images, referring also to the contemporary Vietnam War being brought into the American living room, via the television. Celmins interrupts the flow of images of war/horror from the daily news cycle with her hand – slowly, carefully, even obsessively she recreates the snapshot. To draw or to paint is to stop the circulation of images, to memorialize the instant, to say "look" and "remember." (Whiting 2009)

By highlighting this idea of freezing time (and stopping image circulation), Whiting interprets the recreation of the photographic clipping as an act of remembrance, using drawing's potential for extended mediation to rethink a past event. As a way of reconciling their initially overbearing subject matters with the distended temporality of this highly technical and concentrated manner of drawing, perhaps one could say that these powerful images (significant for Celmins and her personal history, but also for the world at large) demand a type of attention which can never be accommodated in a fleeting glance, but must always incorporate something more sustained. Bryson's thesis is again useful here for its consideration of a still life trait most pertinent to Celmins and equally, looking forward, to the drawing work of Kate Davis: "When driven to extremes, hyper-attention not only produces an interval between the perceiving self and objects; it separates the self from other selves. The subject stares or glares at the world" (Bryson 1990, pp. 88–89). This idea of hyper-attention as a distancing strategy has much to offer our understanding of Celmins' deployment of photographic material within the progressive arc of her drawing in the 1960s and 1970s.

At this point in the trajectory of Celmins' practice – the paper ephemera series – the photograph retains the status of a problem, a knot to be untangled, or an object to be conquered. Drawing a secondary print media photograph (including the creases, borders, and roughly torn edges of its support) in this clinical, concentrated manner creates the kind of subject/object separation Bryson is talking about. No one is about to mistake Celmins' drawing for a collage incorporating an actual clipping, and this is manifestly not the artist's intention: we are never really *deceived* as such, but instead placed in a state of uncertainty that operates to concentrate our attentions on the drawing's finish. The viewer is asked to interrogate that gap between the two representational variants, photograph, and drawing: a gap that is made viable through the artist's willingness to explore and present a form of trompe l'oeil paper precision.

The relationship between these two material states for drawing reinforces its striated internal structure, enclosing the photographic image (as an indexical and intrinsically graphic formulation) *within* drawing, even as it stands in its shadow. Such a viewpoint is given credibility by the artist herself, whose explanation that “I decided the clippings were this wonderful range of grays for me to explore with graphite,” eschews the language and problems of photography altogether (Friedrich 2011, p. 19). What Celmins articulates here is not a spatial expansion for drawing, but rather a focusing down, into the compressed space of a single, standard sheet of paper.

It is as a result of this approach that the artist’s practice directly confronts what Stuart Morgan has called “that vague word finish: not a description of surface but rather a measure of the degree of closure, completeness, and apparent potential for independence an image has achieved” (Morgan 1996, p. 77). This drawing finish is of course only the final, veneered layer of Celmins’ construction, the lengthy processes of preparation and making sealed in and obscured from view. Admitting it to be a “vague” concept, Morgan’s expansive definition of finish as a qualitative yet mutable entity conforms to what has been a meandering but persistent thread of doubt throughout this text. Operating in a state of doubt sharpens perceptions out of necessity; our uncertainty causes us to pay closer attention. Perhaps this is what drawing needs to do for Celmins, to an extent: to orchestrate a situation in which she is forced to pay attention, to look and not to unravel that looking, but to underscore its isolation and finish.¹¹ Celmins represents a counterpoint to repeated art-historical interpretations of drawing as a radically incomplete process. Her drawing is instead smoothed over and finished as a medium and as an idea, disavowing haphazard or random interventions in a zone of work that is subject to the strictures of control and watchfulness.

The work of Glasgow-based contemporary artist Kate Davis ranges across sculpture, drawing, printmaking, photography, text, and film. Her complex installations and research practices combine art-historical references, a self-reflexive consideration of the artist’s subjectivity and its wider political contexts, and a careful material acknowledgment of the physical pressures and pleasures inextricably bound to the act of object making. Within Davis’s intermedial practice, there is an ongoing commitment to the medium of drawing and, at certain moments, to the seemingly flawless monochromatic re-drawing, in pencil, of various photographic media. The final part of this essay concentrates on a three-part drawing series by Davis, *Who is a Woman now?* (2008), which takes as its subject reproductions of Willem de Kooning’s pivotal and controversial oil paintings *Woman I* (1950–52) and *Woman III* (1953). In Davis’ large-scale *Who is a Woman now? II* (Figure 16.3), the MoMA postcard of *Woman I* has been folded along its vertical axis, enabling it to stand upright as a three-dimensional object on a flat, empty surface. It appears, in its composition and styling, as if posed for a still life in a photographer’s studio, complete with neutral black backdrop, strong directional lighting, and carefully delineated tabletop shadow that reinforces the postcard’s objecthood, and the drawing’s immaculate representational finish.

In this work, the artist’s aim was to capture the image “as sensitively, as slowly, and as realistically as possible.”¹² Davis describes this as her interest in the tenderness and care that arises from the slow, meditative process of transcribing a staged photographic object into a monumental pencil drawing. Of this intensive private drawing process, and its desired public outcome, she comments: “The manifestation and



FIGURE 16.3 Kate Davis (2008) *Who is a Woman now? II*. Framed pencil drawing and silkscreen print on paper; 170 × 130 cm. Source: © Kate Davis. Courtesy the artist.

investment of time needs to be an implication in the viewing experience.” And yet, the fallibility of the hand is crucial in all of this. While always thinking about the works in relation to a longer history of photorealism, Davis had no particular desire for the final drawings to *look* like photographic images. Despite this intention, there is undoubtedly a moment of uncertainty for first-time viewers as to their material reality. The work performs a mimetic transformation several spatial and temporal layers removed from the photographic referent (even further from the “original” artwork), with the flatness of the postcard reproduction distorted by its treatment at the hands of the artist, as a slight physical object capable of being manipulated and even destroyed. De Kooning’s painting remains, however, instantly recognizable, despite being drained of its acidic color palette and forced to follow the anamorphic

curve of its humble paper home. Victoria Horne observes of this series' postcard re-drawings that:

Through this deceptively minor act, Davis returns to these female models a sense of corporeality and contests a flattening art historical vision... Davis' *quasi*-sculptural intervention ... encourages her audience to look anew at these famous works that they think they might know. The uncanny materiality of the redrawn postcard figures also confronts viewers with the vagaries of vision and concealment, provoking reflection on the complicated pleasure derived from looking and the displeasure when this is prevented. (Horne 2015, pp. 40–41)

Horne emphasizes the subtle defiance embodied by Davis's act, facing down the patriarchal currents of abstract expressionism and its still potent political narratives. The artist's drawing gesture inverts the painterly violence performed on the bodies of de Kooning's women, by submitting its "second life" as a printed reproduction to an echo of that original bodily rupture. Horne's description of the work's "uncanny materiality" is apt: like our encounter with Celmins's print media clippings, the viewer of Davis's drawings is liable to experience a destabilizing split-second of material ambiguity, provoked by their unsettlingly flawless finish. The overlaying of multiple art-historical moments inflames this sensation of schism.

Enjoying the exaggeration required to push drawing toward its extreme limits of finish, the artist is able, through such an emphasis, to question certain assumptions about the medium, particularly its supposed directness and provisional nature. Davis takes pleasure in the intrinsic perversity of a photorealist drawing finish: a finish that makes invisible certain key aspects of its making (the labor of drawing, the time invested). Another interpretation of the physical difficulty and effort (even pain) required to produce these precisely rendered drawings dialectically relates this effaced labor to the aggressive male presence of de Kooning as an art-historical figure often defined by his grotesquely painful depiction of women.¹³ To execute these drawings required a prolonged daily effort of crouching and concentration (of mind, hand, and body): an exhausting sedentary activity whose repetitive physical stresses are a familiar part of many jobs, skilled activities, and unskilled labors. The adjective frequently deployed to describe her drawings – "painstaking" – is pertinent here, in its invocation of the physical suffering willingly undertaken in the pursuit of perfection.¹⁴ This willing embrace of painstaking activity can be ascertained within various contemporary manifestations of labor-intensive drawing.

Who is a Woman now? II makes abundantly clear that its subject is the artwork-as-postcard reproduction, by delineating the folded card as carefully as the image itself. These folded reproductions embody a pathetic quality, the painting re-historicized as a delicate object in its contorted postcard form. Davis endeavored to treat the reproductions *like women*: the folds weren't contrived; they were practical actions to make the postcards stand up in her studio during the observation and drawing process. This nearly ridiculous performance purposefully undercuts the source painting's grandeur and forbidding menace. Their crumpled stature and grand staging together impart ideas of sensitivity and handling: the *Who is a Woman now?* drawings were made on an impressive scale both to retain their monumentality and to underscore their feebleness. As works they simultaneously contain anger and impeccable control. Control is

a live, urgent thing for Davis; it supplies the energy that palpably crackles beneath the images' eerily still traceless surfaces.

In an artistic practice that is multifarious by its very nature, why did Davis make use of drawing for her rejoinder to de Kooning and his legacy? The artist argues that it is partly to do with the accessibility of drawing's material knowledge, which doesn't always follow with other visual means. Most people, regardless of their occupation or circumstances, have held a pencil; know what it means to make a mark; how to erase the drawn line. Painting does not offer that openness and possibility of erasure in such an accessible way, and yet her response to the propositional character of drawing is to offer a *détournement*, away from universality and toward the heightened sense of particularity and peculiarity in ultra-finished drawing.

Davis concedes that when she works in series, it is normally the last work that she is most happy with: across every sequential attempt, the body and eye take a long time to reach a place of habitual, trained ability. There is a slow accrual of skill and technique within not just the making of one work, but also the entire group. This notion has links to the temporal gymnastics that the drawings' timeline performs. As Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith notes of the title *Who is a Woman now?*: "The closing adverb 'now' adds a crucial temporal inflection, telling in its implication that currently pressing questions of identity, subjectivity, and self-representation might best be considered in a historical light" (Mac Giolla Léith 2010, p. 3).

In these slippery photo-mimetic works the body of the artist is effaced, is made invisible, just like her labor and her time. Effectively reversing process art's direct visualization of the activity and action of the drawing hand *as it happens*, these drawings give almost no indication of the artist's trace or presence. The "hand" in this drawing leaves so imperceptible a trace that one can only discern its drawn state through a close examination of the graphite tone and surface. Davis's visual and temporal disruption of the incomplete and transitional nature of drawing-as-process can most clearly be seen in this withdrawal of bodily presence, this disappearance beneath the photo-finish. The artist insists that the viewers of her work do not wish to be reminded of the labor behind the drawing, and she likens this conjuror's act of concealment to the way in which people rarely discuss the labor implicit in domestic chores, in the day-to-day household drudgery that often falls on the shoulders of women. Paramount here is Davis's interest in "the situation in which you're making the work being part of the work." Cultural, social and practical contexts and concerns are folded into the work of this avowedly feminist artist; there is a political imperative to do so. Instinct plays a role equal to research, planning, and skill in her practice. The pencil becomes a quasi-mechanized extension of the body, the body becomes a drawing machine of the utmost precision and perfection, and yet we are not left to face rote automation. Finding something reparative in this skilled labor, the sensitive handling inherent in this slow act of re-drawing becomes imbued with something that is to do with the speed of the artist's mind. This reparative impulse also implies a sense of laborious penance in the making of the image, and its recoupment. What do we do with great works of art that perform violence against women?

The *doppelgänger* potential of the relationship between photography and drawing that I have sketched throughout this essay features strongly in the realization and durational encounter of *Who is a Woman now?* This site of paired mimicry creates an encounter that enables longer durations of looking. Pressure and time together

produce a space of almost uncomfortable looking. It is this space that we begin to see manifested in the de Kooning postcard drawings: a space demanding to be interrogated by both the viewer and the artist herself, a finished scene that belongs to a continuum of still-unanswered questions, including the very title of the work.

Rather than drawing that is active and doing, whether that action is explanatory and clarifying, an expulsion of energy, or repetitive movement tending toward solipsism, this drawing *appears* almost entirely passive and still, masking the process used to make it. Its origins reside in, or are wholly dependent upon, photography – a foreign element contaminating unmediated expression and preventing decisive linear action. When there is an agent like photography involved, all notions of schematic clarity, preparation, or autographic function in drawing are discarded summarily. If the working drawing exists, as Mel Bochner insists, as the “residue of thought,” what Celmins, Ruscha, and Davis do with the finished drawing is to produce within it and from it a different kind of residue, with a different sort of temporality in play: a more distanced, mediated residue or trace (Bochner 2008, p. 61).

The broader question of what finish can mean in this moment has been central to this essay’s repositioning of drawing, always with the issues of temporality and skill in mind. Competency here is manifested by two technical facets: a high-resolution finish enabled by the category of the post-photographic drawing, which in the case of all three artists translates an excess of time spent into the gloss of instantaneity. At a moment when any display of skill would apparently cancel out the relevancy of drawing (to recall Peter Plagens’s 1969 account of the medium), Ed Ruscha’s assertive competency produces a shadow space of invisible exertion and intense, all-over visuality that compresses the extended temporality of drawing into neat, readymade media units. Between Ruscha and Celmins, we can view two distinct approaches to drawing’s finish: strategic information drop-out versus hyper-attention – an excess of detail remaining on the drawing surface. They both share an excessive level of control over the image’s finish. Here we confront the implication that Ruscha was less faithful to his photographic source material than Celmins, and certainly, Ruscha’s commitment to ‘editing out’ specific details returns these Los Angeles apartments to the drawing board as *concepts*, to be shifted and mutated into different contexts and uses.

Exploring drawing’s wide-ranging role in conceptual practices enables alternative and under-examined examples of the medium to come to the fore, including modes of illusionistic drawing that demonstrate an engagement with the historical category of trompe l’oeil, such as Celmins and Davis. In probing the re-emergence of trompe l’oeil after artistic practice was so radically reconfigured by the diagrammatic tendencies of 1960s conceptualism, I have argued that its illusionism constitutes an equally valid response to the theories of deskilling and dematerialization that privileged idea over object.

The “finish focus” of Vija Celmins’s 1968 clipping series was trompe l’oeil and its historical lineage that undermines, through extreme illusion, direct ties to reality. Hanneke Grootenboer’s assessment of trompe l’oeil as “an emblem of blindness within the act of looking” points to the ambiguities of its ultra-finished state, both in terms of the temporal processes of fabrication and the viewer’s encounter with the trompe l’oeil construct itself, which can short circuit any bodily aspect to the encounter (being still or “dead”), replacing it with the distance of fiction and uncertainty. Crucially, as Kate Davis’s commitment to the ongoing work of drawing proves, finish doesn’t guarantee stability or permanence. Displacing physicality and objecthood for

something less secure, more distanced and artificial, these extreme modalities of finish operate in a fugitive space that is but one manifestation of the conceptual ground of drawing. Finish for these artists is a means to unite disparate modes of imaging, in drawing that is caught between medium and media.

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Notes

- 1 A recent joint exhibition examined this terrain in contemporary art, *Double Take: Drawing and Photography*, The Photographers' Gallery and Drawing Room, London, 2016.
- 2 An in-depth analysis of early-career Ruscha's complex relationship to pop can be found in Hal Foster's account, "Ed Ruscha, or the Deadpan Image," in his *The First Pop Age: Painting and Subjectivity in the Art of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter, and Ruscha*, Princeton/Oxford (2012, pp. 210–248).
- 3 James Meyer has explored this in his essay "Another Minimalism," citing Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson's black and white video *East Coast, West Coast* (1969) as a parodic example of the clichéd split between "slack soft" California (F. Scott Fitzgerald's words) and the overly intellectualized east coast. Smithson plays the LA sculptor, Holt the staunch New York conceptualist, with Smithson emphatically stating at one point: "I don't care about all this 'Systems' stuff. I'm out here *doing* it."
- 4 As Liz Kotz has noted, the conceptual turn to photography "was part of an overarching tendency to use mechanical recording and reproduction technologies – tape recorders, video, Xerox machines, and so on – to make art. Such technologies promised a machinelike impersonality and distance from conventional modes of self-expression." L. Kotz, *Words to Be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art*, Cambridge, MA/London, (2007, p. 213).
- 5 S. LeWitt, "Sentences on Conceptual Art," first published in 0–9, New York, 1969, and *Art–Language*, England, May 1969: "Ideas can be works of art; they are in a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical."
- 6 On this subject see B. Fer, "Moth-man: Ruscha's Light and Dark" in R. Dean and L. Turvey (eds.) *Edward Ruscha Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings Volume 4: 1988–1992*, New York/Göttingen, 2009, pp. 5–12). Fer writes on p. 5: "I think one of the reasons he has deployed black and white so effectively is because it offers him the most schematic means of registering light and dark in painting and, for all the much-vaunted deadpan tone of his work, dramatizes the almost extravagant projections as well as the everyday visual habits at stake in the mechanics of viewing itself. Ruscha paints not only a set of iconographical motifs, but the visual habits that saturate contemporary image-culture."

- 7 On this point, see A. Schwartz, *Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles*, Cambridge, MA/London, 2010, pp. 34–35 and pp. 194–195.
- 8 M. Bochner, “Anyone Can Learn to Draw” (1969) in M. Bochner (ed.) *Solar System and Rest Rooms: writings and interviews, 1965–2007*, (Cambridge, MA/London, 2008, p. 61). Bochner declares that “in much recent art, drawing has been held in disrepute,” particularly because of its “autographic nature.” Bochner attempts here to reposition drawing as a viable medium by retooling it slightly. He lists three categories of drawing: working, diagrammatic, and finished. Bochner claims the working drawing as “the residue of thought,” “the place where the artist formulates, contrives and discards his ideas.” This differentiates them from the more functional “diagrammatic drawings” (executed to aid the professional fabrication of a work, for example). The least interesting category for Bochner is that of “finished drawings,” which are equivalent to works made by that artist in other mediums and are self-enclosed entities. Drawing here veers too far away from the direct registration of an idea, or at least it compromises that raw ideation with an uncomfortable amount of sensuality or polish.
- 9 In 1965, two years before Celmins began her paper ephemera series, The Art Center in La Jolla, San Diego had a three-person show of nineteenth century trompe l’oeil works. See A. Frankenstein’s review, “Harnett, Peto, Haberle: The three 19th century still life artists make a striking show at La Jolla,” in *Artforum*, (Vol. 4, No. 2 (October 1965), pp. 27–33), in which the author compares the artists’ work to Surrealism and pop art.
- 10 Celmins stresses that the “photograph always seemed to me kind of dead ... I crawl over the photograph like an ant. And I document my crawling on another surface.” V. Celmins in S. Sollins, *Art: 21: Art in the Twenty-First Century, Volume 2* (New York, 2003, p.162).
- 11 Deanna Petherbridge has framed finish more historically, covering Renaissance presentation drawings to Celmins’s own work, writing that: “A discussion of finish in drawing is essentially about temporality, contextualisation, and discontinuities. Even when finished drawings are based on copies or appropriated from others, they are embedded in the period of making by their exacting technique and elaboration of strategies of appropriation...” (Petherbridge 2010, p. 85).
- 12 All direct quotations from the artist are taken from a conversation with the author, 8 April 2016, Kate Davis studio, Glasgow.
- 13 For an illuminating reading of this particular painting, see Fionna Barber, “The politics of feminist spectatorship and the disruptive body: de Kooning’s *Woman I* reconsidered,” in A. Jones and A. Stephenson (eds.) *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, (Abingdon, 2005, pp. 127–137).
- 14 See Dominic Paterson, exhibition essay, *Not Just the Perfect Moments* (exh. cat., Drawing Room), London, 2013, unpaginated.

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