

Students Question Students

Running Around the Pool: Contemporary Drawing Fall 2007

By: Alyse Sedley, Ashley Hickman, and Kelly Paul

1. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines drawing as “the art of representing objects or forms on a surface chiefly by means of lines.” Find one work in the exhibition that you feel keeps to this definition. Find at least two works that you feel break that definition. Is line an important element in those works? How do the artists in *Running Around the Pool* use line in various ways? Is line always 2-dimensional? How does the function of line change in the 3-dimensional works?



2. Many of the works in the exhibition note an “equivalency between visual and linguistic elements,” where words are to writers as drawing is to artists. How do word and image work together in *Contemporary Drawing*? Give at least 2 examples of artists in *Running Around the Pool* that use word and image together. Does their use of both linguistic and aesthetic elements reinforce their message or obscure it? Why?
3. Several of the artists in *Running Around the Pool* challenge the separation between representation and abstraction by incorporating both visual categories. Some of the artists go so far as to categorize their works as “abstract representations,” challenging historical conventions of artistic movements and locating themselves within both modernist and post-modernist traditions. Julie Mehretu is one of those artists. Look at her *Untitled* works. How does her use of the drawing medium allow or encourage the blurring of realism and abstraction? Can you find other examples of such blurring in *Running Around the Pool*?
4. Some artistic movements that are represented in the exhibition are: Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, California Funk, Chicago Imagism, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art. How do the artists cross-examine and combine these movements in their work to challenge the conventions of art history?
5. Social issues are present in many of the pieces in *Running Around the Pool*. What is it about drawing, as a medium, that seemingly lends itself to social or political commentary? Do you see this in the exhibition? Give examples. How does a loose translation of social issues into visual form affect the address of those issues? Does it aid or weaken the idea?

6. Drawing is historically seen as preparation, showing potential for what a finished work of art could be. Where do you see the idea of potential in this exhibition? Do any of the works in the show look unfinished? Why? In *Running Around the Pool* do the works still only show potential, or is there something more? What does this say about how the view of drawing is changing?
7. The graffiti artists Swoon and Barry McGee draw from “raw” inspirations, such as billboard alterations, poster campaigns, and found surfaces, to create art. Despite their classical training, their affiliation with “raw” media alludes to the introduction of the “outsider artist” into the world of fine arts. What preconceptions accompany the term “raw”? Do these notions alter our acknowledgement of drawing as a fine art? Can “outsider art” be considered “fine art”? Does the inclusion of more primitive or “raw” art-forms diversify or threaten our understanding of artistic progression?

8. Look at *Untitled (woman holding flower)* by Clare Rojas. How does the juxtaposition of fantasy and reality, natural and unnatural, include the viewer in the work? What kind of relationship does this work foster between the viewer and the artist? How often do our own experiences alter our perception of a work of art—does this connection jeopardize or enhance the integrity of an art form?



9. *Running Around the Pool* shows a correlation with popular culture. The Pop Art movement occurred in America in the Late 1950's, and was characterized by the use of the forms of popular culture such as comic books and advertisements. Raymond Pettibon uses popular styles as a “universal means of expression.” How else does the connection to the traditions of Pop Art manifest itself in the exhibition and aid our interpretation of *Contemporary Drawing*? How does the work of these artists differ from the work of Pop Art artists? How is it similar?
10. The work of Louis Bourgeois has been called “ambiguous” because of her use of universal themes. Look at her piece *Untitled*. Her forms look familiar yet remain personal and unique to the perception of each viewer. How does such an open interpretation of art affect the way it is analyzed? How does it affect the relationship between artist and viewer?