

## *Dimensional Drawing Project*

In 2004 Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute Museum of Art was hosting an exhibition of my work but needed additional assistance with the installation in order to open the show on time. I suggested to Mary Murray, the curator, to ask sculpture students studying at the institute to help with the installation since this work had been designed for someone other than myself to install. A blend of drawing and sculpture, these new works were in essence drawing kits with instructions that allowed the preparator varying degrees of freedom in deciding how the piece would be installed and in turn the preparator would become invested in the process and its outcome. The student response was overwhelmingly positive not only in mounting the exhibition but also with their attendance at both the lecture and following reception. As an artist and educator, whose primary focus is drawing, I realized developing this experience into a mobile project could be a powerful tool in the understanding and teaching of drawing to students both in studio programs as well as in unrelated fields. Creating an exhibition through collaboration between student teams and engaged faculty as well as myself has proven to be an inspiring platform for teaching drawing from an unconventional vantage point. The *Dimensional Drawing Project* can interface with existing curriculum thus benefiting a broad spectrum of students. Currently the entire exhibition travels in two reusable crates via FedEx Ground. Project objectives, introduction, and history of drawing dimensionally, drawing exercises, information on the work in the *Project*, tools or necessary equipment and a list of past venues follow.

Creighton Michael, 2007

## Project objectives:

1. To expand one's definition of drawing.
2. To understand drawing's relationship to other marking systems such as notation, calligraphy, choreography and shorthand.
3. To demystify art and the making of art.
4. To experience the drawing process from various perspectives.
5. To enjoy the sensual pleasures of mark making.
6. To witness and share in the emergence of pattern/imagery.
7. To appreciate the benefit of collaboration.
8. To generate a multilayered discourse among one's peers.
9. To develop new avenues for creative thinking.
10. To gain confidence in one's ability.
11. To apply the knowledge learned from participating in this project to one's personal artistic development.

## Introduction: *The Dimensional Drawing Project*

Drawing dimensionally has a long tradition in the history of art, particularly in terms of process. The choreographer relates marks on a page to a body's movements in space. The cartographer allows one to move through a space not yet seen, simply by following a pattern of marks. Artists, especially sculptors, in the 20th C experimented with translating the immediacy inherent in marking activity to the creation of forms in space. Picasso did flashlight drawings documented in a film by Man Ray. Fred Sandback used string to create forms that identified as well as incorporated the space they inhabited. Stephen Antonakos drew on building facades with neon creating architectural interventions. Lee Bontecou compared the stitch to a mark as she constructed her now iconic sculptures. Rockne Krebs employed lasers to literally draw in space and Richard Long made himself the drawing implement as he mapped various spaces by walking. These are but a few examples where the traditional boundaries of drawing have been extended.

Each student writes a brief paragraph defining drawing in his or her own words.

The class plays *Exquisite Corpse*.

Collaborative student teams report on the following artists and their work:

William Anastasi

Stephen Antonakos

Lee Bontecou (both sculpture and drawings)

Rebecca Horn

Rockne Krebs

Richard Long

Fred Sandback

Mark Tobey

Vincent van Gogh (late drawings)

Rembrandt van Rijn (late drawings)

Collaborative teams of two to three students visit office supply and hardware stores to discover and select materials with which to draw dimensionally.

Consider this definition of a drawing:

A drawing is a collection of marks or units, which create pattern and is related to other marking systems such as calligraphy and musical notation.

What is the composition of a drawing unit (mark)?

What material or materials can constitute a drawing unit (mark)?

Is the choice of material important?

Is a drawing anything other than a document of past activity or action?

How is a drawing to be seen?

Where and at what distance is a drawing to be seen or experienced?

Does a drawing encourage participation?

Is a drawing static?

Does a drawing lose integrity if the appearance of the drawing changes?

How important is ownership?

The following exercises are designed to encourage the student to think differently about the nature and process of drawing.

#### Assignment: Telephone

Based on the children's game of the same name, Telephone explores the nature of abstraction. Students circle around the model with only a view of the paper of the person to their left. One student is chosen to begin and will draw the model with as much visual information as is available. All other students must copy exactly what has been drawn on the paper to their left. Once the first student has finished, the others will complete their drawings in sequence. After the last student has finished, the drawings are hung in order. The natural distillation of form begins a conversation on abstraction

#### Assignment: Mirage

Create a suite of drawings from discovering images hidden within common material such as grain patterns in plywood.

#### Assignment: Drawing 360

The student draws an assortment of objects or a model as the student circles the stand at varying speeds recording visual information while in constant motion. Overlay and recording sequential episodes are two approaches to consider.

#### Assignment: Mapping

In a set of drawings each student records recent itineraries such as the walk to class, selecting breakfast or lunch, shopping at the bookstore and so on retracing time and space from memory. What visual or pictorial devices will the student employ to represent space, time and transitions between both?

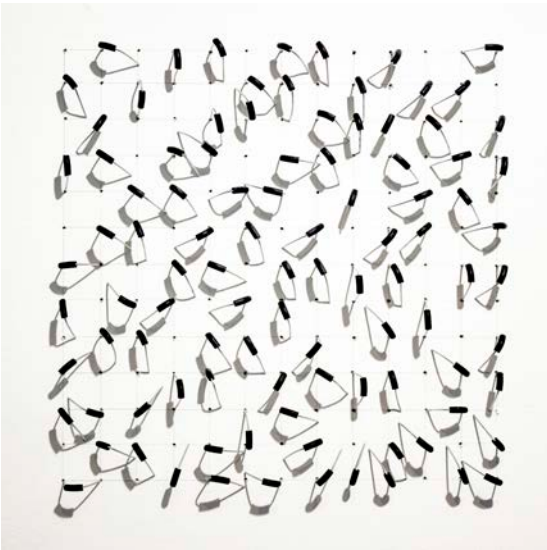
#### Assignment: Dimensional Drawing transition

Develop a set of drawings focusing on the relationship between mark and pattern. Then move that activity into the third dimension and invent strategies that can translate the experience of drawing to others. Consider drawing as a board game or puzzle.

# *The Dimensional Drawing Project*

Information on the series with samples:

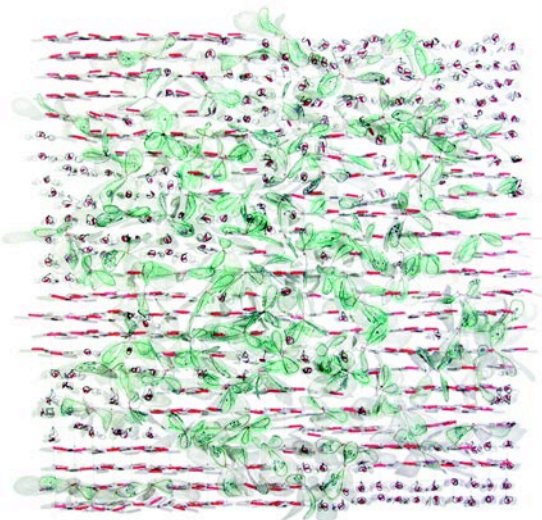
*Grid* and its history 2002-2015



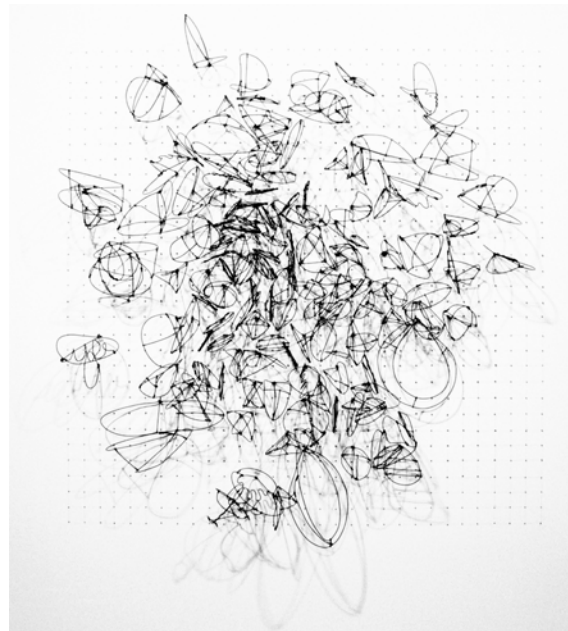
*Grid 2903*



*Grid 2504*



*Grid 2905*



*Grid 4007*

*Grid* is a series of dimensional drawings that combine the activity and process of drawing with the physical and spatial concerns of sculpture. *Grid* translates the repetitive hand function associated with drawing into tangible units or marks. These marks, composed of wire in combination with glue, plastic, wood or rubber, are materials used more often in the making of sculpture than drawing. Following the instructions in the accompanying schematic, holes are drilled at randomly selected intersections within the grid. The early works experimented with various grid sizes before arriving at the 24" or 12" square grid as the standard format.

During 2003, the organic form of a mark is replaced with a U-shape similar to that of a staple. The staple form when perpendicular to the wall is completed by shadow projecting the mark in space. Intersections are chosen by a predetermined numeric outline, though in later grids, holes will be at every intersection increasing more variety in the resulting pattern. Each *Grid* has an additional schematic instructing the preparator as to the placement of each drawing element. The orientation of a particular unit is at the discretion of the installer. This procedure allows for variations in the visual appearance of the drawing each time it is installed. In essence, it is redrawn. As the series evolved more discretion was given to the preparator. Additionally, the shape of the individual units began to further imitate the wrists movements familiar in drawing activity employing a variety of twists in the wire to generate shadows that could create a sense of motion. Elements such as tubing and dowel segments were added to depict line segments in space.

As a physical marking system, the *Grid* series explores subtle differences between drawing and writing while challenging the static nature and identity of traditional drawing. *Grid* captures the sense of immediacy and emergence inherent in the process of drawing. Unlike drawing, which characteristically records a moment, action or image in time, *Grid* assumes the fleeting nature of installation. As a hybrid work, *Grid*, resides at the intersections of drawing, writing and sculpture.

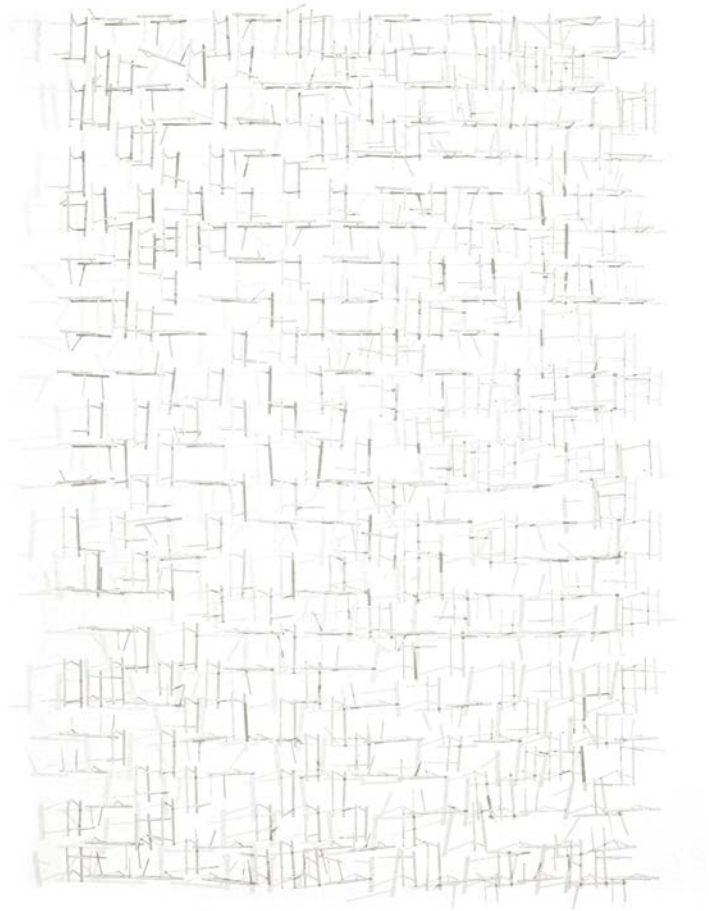
*Segment* 2003-2004



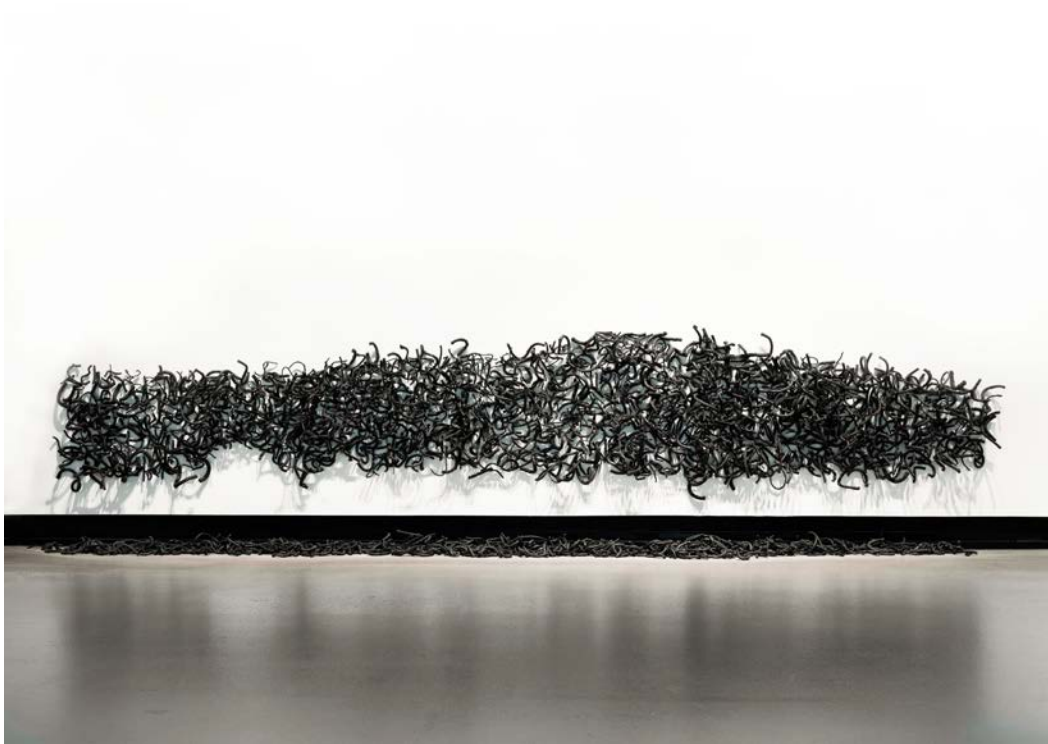
A tangible metaphor for a line segment in space, *Segment* is composed of one hundred, 18-inch sections of twine, each tied to the other forming a circular stroke. In every work either the square knot or the length of twine is painted to contrast with its remaining section, articulating the difference between the knots and the twine. As a continuous line, *Segment* is a contour drawing composed of marks (knots) and lines (twine sections). Like other Dimensional Drawings, the accompanying schematic instructs the preparator as to the initial installation. In the case of *Segment*, there are five wooden hooks (points) to be installed into the wall. The first hook is placed 60" from the floor. The remaining four are placed 30" away from the initial hook in any direction chosen by the installer. This creates a different skeletal configuration with each installation. The placement or drawing of the one hundred fifty feet of painted twine is reliant on the installer, who similar to a jazz musician is encouraged to interpret the arrangements of previous installations. This process results in a unique variation of *Segment* each time it is installed. Unlike *Grid*, which focuses on the hand and wrist movements occurring during the drawing process, *Segment* directs attention to the broader strokes developed by arm and shoulder motion.



*Tuck* 2003

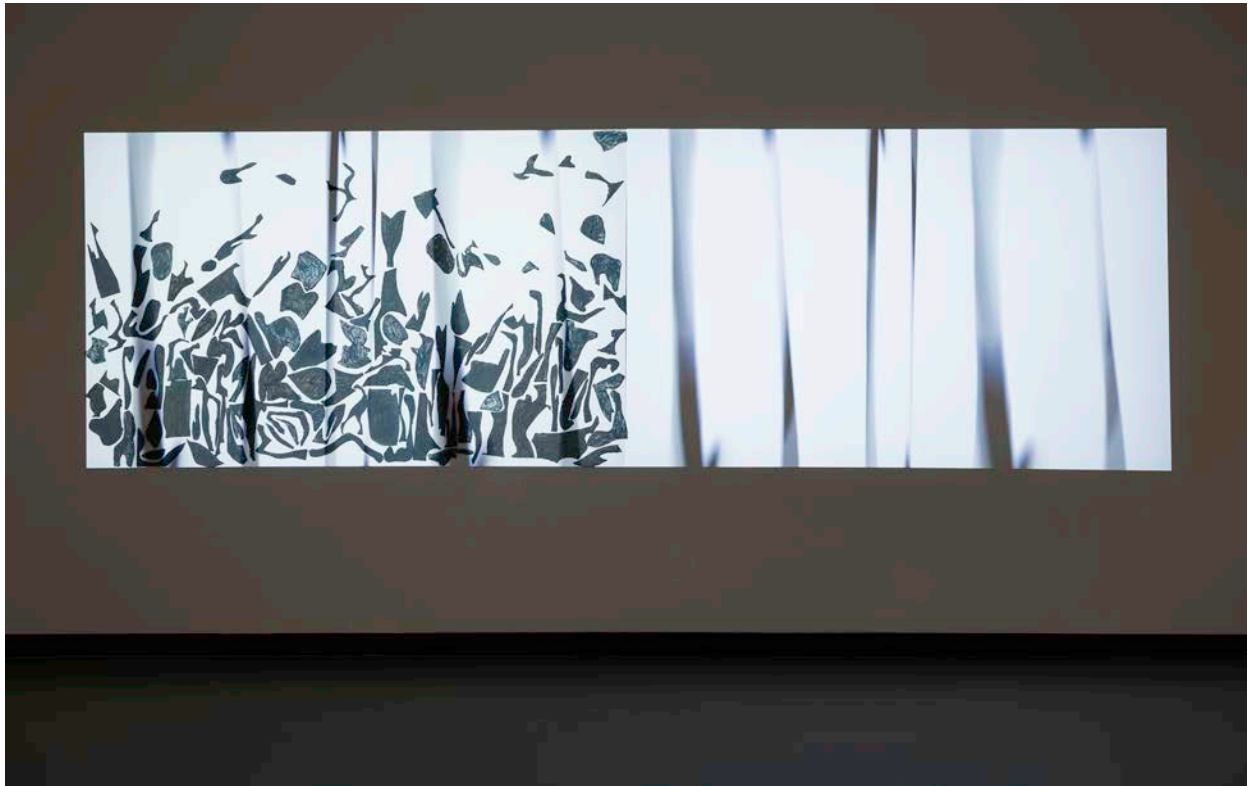


*Tuck* is composed of wooden dowels, which are coated in a mixture of paper and charcoal, three elements of the same substance existing at different time intervals. These marks are constructed in 3" and 4" modular forms. The accompanying schematic directs the installer to the specific intersection for drilling the 1/8" holes. Placement and selection of each modular form or mark are at the discretion of the installer. The increasingly random choices made by the preparator result in transforming the drawing's image (identity) after every installation. The shifting appearance and spatial ambiguity of these works alter the viewer's ability to distinguish between form and space, substance and illusion.



*SquigglelinearB 407* 2014 installation at Colgate University

*Squiggle*, a series of drawing installations, mimics the process of drawing by focusing on various wrist motions and the product of such activity the mark. Similar to the multiple individual gestures employed in the production of Vincent van Gogh's late reed pen and ink landscapes, these calligraphic line segments encourage the viewer to explore the vibrant nature of chirographic patterns that intersect drawing, writing and sculpture. Similar to van Gogh's drawing process, *Squiggle* is constructed one mark at a time, not to portray a recognizable pattern such as a specific location, but to physically contain the memory of a marking activity. Made of various lengths and widths of cotton rope and coated with a paper pulp, graphite and an acrylic paste mixture, the marks in *Squiggle* capture the variety and intimacy associated with traditional drawing. Unlike traditional drawing's fixed ability to record past action, *Squiggle* assumes a paradoxical nature that blends physicality with the ephemeral.



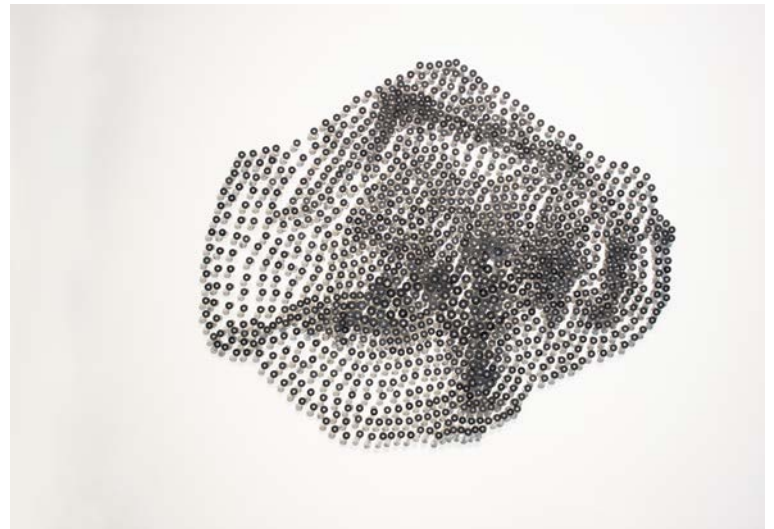
*ShadowsSpeak: a Transdimensional Drawing* is a video installation about isolation and failed communication. The shadow drawing (video) is of someone signing, *can you understand what I am saying?* It is repeated with intensity and frustration, while the soundtrack parallels a similar attempt at communication typing the phrase, *can you see what I am saying?* The left panel of the video projection is made of 122 shapes randomly taken from frames in the video and arranged by a student team to enhance or expand the overall narrative. Each shape is made of cardboard and coated with a graphite and paper mixture.



A binary drawing kit composed of *dits*, oblong shapes coated in a mixture of charcoal and paper and *dots*, circular shapes covered with a graphite and paper blend. As with other work in the *Dimensional Drawing Project*, the identity or pattern of this floor drawing changes with each installation.



*Extent 115*



*Extent 215*

To alleviate the time constraints inherent in other Dimensional Drawings and to offer a direct drawing process that includes opportunity for erasure, two drawings from the *Extent* series have been added. Using clear pushpins mounted with either rubber washers or tile spacers and without the aid or instruction of a schematic, the student team through trial and error will create a new drawing using all of the marks from each specific kit.

*The Dimensional Drawing Project:*  
Tools and equipment needed

Per collaborative team of 2 to 3 students

1 portable lightweight drill with two battery packs

1 lightweight 36" level

1 lightweight 36" ruler

1 6H pencil

4-6 1/16" drill bits

2 1/8" drill bits

1 small container of quick dry spackle

1 flexible spackling knife

1 sheet of fine grain sandpaper

The *Dimensional Drawing Project* ships in two reusable crates via FedEx Ground. One crate is 24"W x 43.5"L x 20"H, weight approximately 80lbs  
Other crate is 29" W x 30.5" L x 23.5"H, weight approximately 75lbs.

## Previous Venues

**Dimensional Line:** Recent Work by Sharon Lounden and Creighton Michael, Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute Museum of Art, Utica, New York; 2004 (brochure)

**SQUIGGLElinear**, Center for the Arts, Towson University, Baltimore, MD; 2007 travels to the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, Wilmington, Delaware; 2008

**CIPHER**, NCC Art Gallery, Norwalk Community College, Norwalk, Connecticut; 2008

**Creighton Michael: PLANE DRAWING**, The Baker Center for the Arts, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania; 2008 catalogue essay by Lilly Wei)

**Tangible Marking: The Dimensional Drawings of Creighton Michael**, Esther Massry Gallery, The College of Saint Rose, Albany, New York; 2010-11 (includes CONSTRUCT a collaboration with composer, Bruce Roter

**Expanded Drawing**, du Pont Gallery, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, Virginia; 2012

**Pattern Play: exploring process and collaboration through drawing**, Clifford Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton, New York; 2013-14  
<https://www.cliffordgallery.org/creighton-michael/>

**Pattern Play II: exploring process and collaboration through drawing**, Biggin Gallery, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama; 2015

**Pattern Play II: exploring process and collaboration through drawing**, Clara M. Eagle Gallery, Murray State University, Murray Kentucky; 2015-16  
<http://wkms.org/post/audio-msu-students-install-creighton-michaels-pattern-play-ii-clara-eagle-gallery>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fwox5TvUq4E>

**Pattern Play II: exploring process and collaboration through drawing**, Herron School of Art and Design, Indianapolis, Indiana; 2016