

Distant proximities
SFDN-185-17 - Spring 2025


Friday 8:00 AM - 1:00 PM
South Hall, 309

Prof. Eli Neuman-Hammond, he/him
enhammond@massart.edu

Course description: We will engage with drawing as a means to understand place, and with place as a means to generate drawing. Each student will choose a specific place to study for the duration of the semester and develop a sustained relationship with that place through intensive drawing. We practice a number of strategies both experimental and traditional to build relationships between our drawings and subject matter. Close observation routes our mark making; distance is the alchemy that transforms these marks into drawings. We rigorously consider drawing not as a container or a window, but as a fragment with real relations to its moment of record and present context. Installation is studied as a part of the drawing process, and student work culminates in an installation of their work. We will study a variety of work from practitioners such as Hiroshige, Charles Sanders Pierce, Pope L., Lee Lozano, Amy Sillman, Cynthia Daignault, Beverly Buchanan, Raoul de Keyser, and Fra Angelico.

[Course description and class policies](#)

Documentation


 1 What needs to be in my portfolio fo...

Commuter Workroom

[Sign up here](#)

3rd floor of the Artists' Residence Hall
Open weekdays 7am-11pm.



Demos and resources

 Blind contour demo.pdf

[Artist Pigments & Dyes - Pigment Database](#)

[Class playlist](#)

Presentations

-  Day 1: distant proximities
-  Day 2: symbol, index, icon

Readings

[symbol-index-icon](#)


[Beverly Buchanan, Marsh Ruins](#)

 John Berger-drawing.pdf

 john-berger-drawn-to-that-moment.pdf

 Drawings and Calamities, Renee Glad...

[David White, A gay man was murdered here: space, sex, and antigay violence in Boston](#)


 the-natural-way-to-draw - Kimon Nicol...

 frederick-law-olmsted-and-the-dialecti...

Video

[Harun Farocki, In Comparison](#)

Victor Erice, *El Sol del Membrillo*

 Rackstraw Downes in "Balance" - Sea...

You need to show up to class every week with these items to get credit in the course:

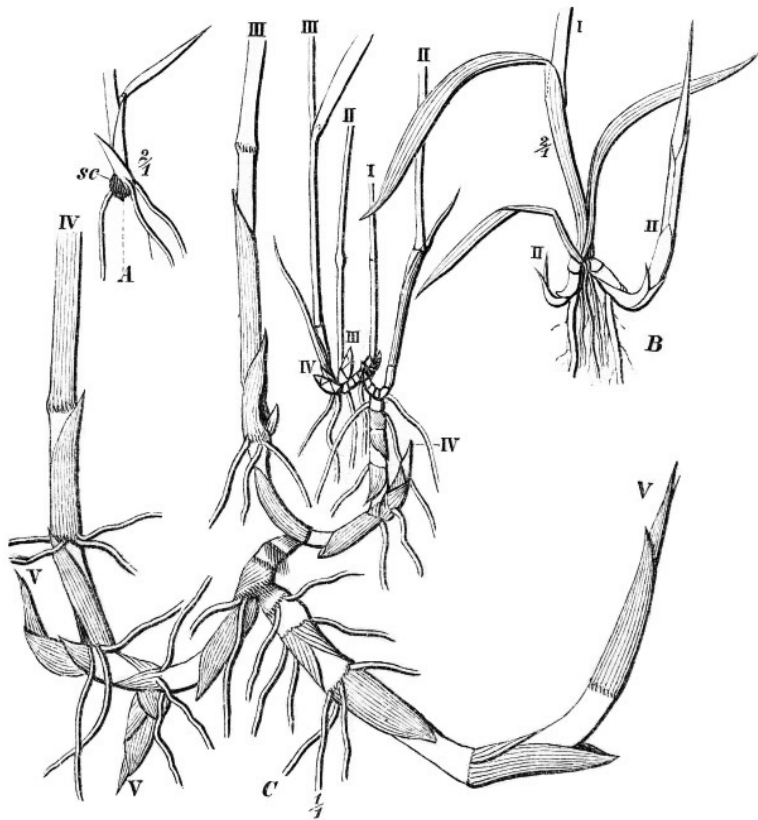
your complete work due for that class
18"x24" newsprint pad
graphite sticks
pen
graphite pencils
vine charcoal
compressed charcoal
eraser

During the first half of the semester, we will focus on developing our relations.
The second half of the semester will be dedicated to drawing as installation.

"Knowledge of sensible realities thus comes to life inside the tissue of experience. It is made;
and made by relations that unroll themselves in time." -William James

Day 1: Distant proximities (1/24)


Assignment: Phragmites



“[Invasive phragmites were probably introduced to North America] sometime during the early part of the 19th century, most likely at one or more coastal ports along the Atlantic coast. In the 1800s, *Phragmites* was documented growing in places where ships ballast was dumped or used to fill marsh lands being converted to railroad and shipping hubs. Because *Phragmites* already grew in coastal marshes as a native component of the plant community and the introduced variety showed little or no morphological differences with native types, the establishment of non-native populations was not recognized. After several decades of persisting in low densities, rapid expansion of the type began and was probably facilitated by human dispersal by means of the widespread construction of railroads and major roadways across North America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.”

K. Saltonstall, Cryptic invasion by a non-native genotype of the common reed, *Phragmites australis*, into North America, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A.* 99 (4) 2445-2449, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.032477999> (2002).

Your assignment has three parts, in this order.

1. Read both David White's [essay on the Back Bay fens, queer space in Boston, and anti-gay violence](#) and Robert Smithson's essay  [frederick-law-olmsted-and-the-dialectical-landscape.pdf](#) (approximately 25 pages total)
2. Go on walk with a partner through the fens. Bring a sketchbook and camera. It's cold, so you don't have to make drawings outside unless you are feeling adventurous. Do take many photos, sketch details and moments that catch your attention, and let your intuition lead you through the space. Consider the readings as you move through the fens. Bring back a stone, or leaf, or piece of trash, or some other object to your studio. **In your studio, make three small drawings based on your walk in the fens** - dimension your paper to around A4 size. Maintain the relationship between your page and your experience of the place—physically, emotionally, ecologically, culturally, and historically.
3. Think about a place you would like to study and draw with for the semester.

Day 2: Symbol, icon, index (1/31)

Assignment: Locate your place. Read [symbol-index-icon](#)



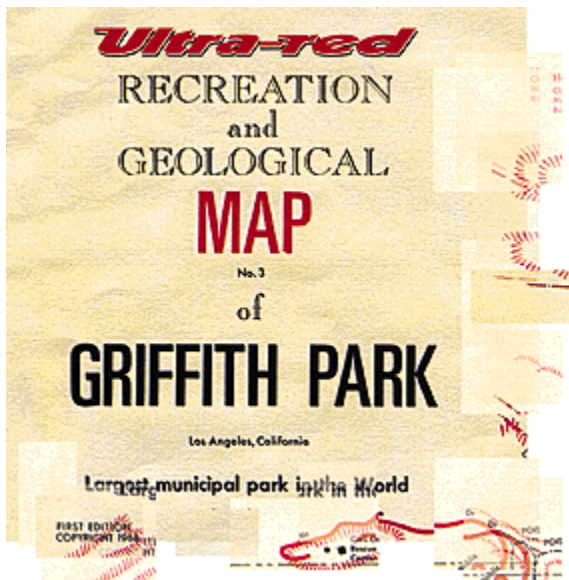
Robert Smithson – 20th century, two sculptures that take abandoned mines as their site.

Smithson is the author of [frederick-law-olmsted-and-the-dialectical-landscape.pdf](#) .

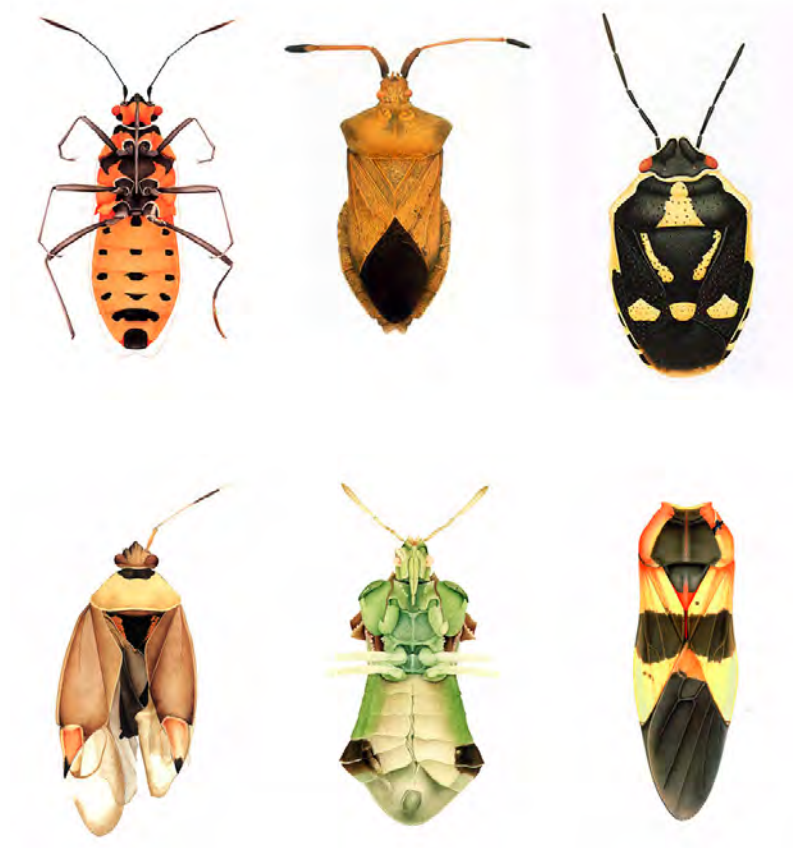




Joseph Mallord William Turner - painted in the 19th century in the United Kingdom. Much of his work borrowed from the language of romantic landscape painting, but brought it to bear upon a landscape transformed by and entangled with industry.



[Second Nature](#) a sound art project about Griffith Park, queer sex, and public space by the art-activist collective Ultra-red– in their words, “queer desire and the urban pastoral.” They are contemporary artists.



Cornelia Hesse-Honegger – Contemporary artist. She makes super precise drawings of wildlife (usually bugs) from the area around Chernobyl. These at first look like scientific depictions of nature—and they are—but upon close examination you can notice mutations in the different bugs.



Mark Dion



Paul Cezanne

Day 3: Plein air approaches to drawing; viewfinder (2/7)

Assignment: Make two initial plein air drawings at your site and read

 [John Berger-drawing.pdf](#).

| Subject matter | Time | Technique | Media |
|----------------|-----------|--|---|
| Place | 1 hour | Blind contour in pen | dimensioned fine drawing paper at least 18 x 24" and pen |
| Place | 1.5 hours | Measured drawing in graphite using your viewfinder | fine drawing paper 18 x 24" and graphite |

Day 4: Plein air approaches to drawing (continued) (2/14)

Assignment: Research the materials your place is made with.

Research the form of your place, its genealogy and production.

Research the context of your place; its history, its surroundings.

Research the use of your site. What do people do here. What does light do here.

What do other species do here. How does dust move here. When is this place.

Make a presentation.

Begin to read [Marsh Ruins](#) (pages 1-15 in the PDF)

Day 5: Present on Beverly Buchanan / peer presentations on places (2/21)

Assignment: Make a drawing with your place.

You must use paper, but no pencils, pens, charcoal, paint, etc. are allowed.

Finish reading [Marsh Ruins](#) (pages 16-43 in the PDF)

Day 6: Site visit: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (2/28)

Assignment: Stations of the cross

Centripetal or centrifugal – whichever you didn't do last time.

NO CLASS (3/7)

Day 7: Approaches to installation (3/14)

Assignment: Make a drawing to be installed at your site.

Day 8: Visiting artist: Lotte Leerschool (3/21)

Assignment: Make 100 photographs of your site.

Day 9: Demo plotter printer (3/28)

Assignment: Use these photographs to draw.

Day 10: Visiting artist: Martha Schnee (4/4)

Assignment: drawing for final projects

NO CLASS (4/11)

Day 11: Viewfinder: present on Raul de Keyser (4/18)


Assignment: drawing for final projects

Day 12: Work day (4/25)

Assignment: drawing for final projects

Day 13: Final critique: first group - guest critic TBA (5/2)

Assignment: final portfolio

See  1 What needs to be in my portfolio folder? .

Day 14: Final critique: second group - guest critic TBA (5/9)

Assignment: final portfolio

See  1 What needs to be in my portfolio folder? .

SFDN-1 81-08: Studio for Drawing
Fall 2024

Tuesday 8am-1pm
South Hall, S308

Prof. Eli Neuman-Hammond, he/him
enhammond@massart.edu

Course Description: The Drawing Studio introduces **drawing as a practice of observation**. We approach the illusions of space and form through formal analysis, subjective interpretation and through the human figure. We consider and examine the multiple functions of drawing across time and culture. We emphasize the breadth of the drawing experience and its application across disciplines.

[Course description and policies](#)

[Materials list](#)

Commuter Workroom

[Sign up here](#)

3rd floor of the Artists' Residence Hall

Open weekdays 7am-11pm.

Documentation

- 1 What needs to be in my portfolio folder?

Presentations

- DRAWING DAY 0.pdf
- DAY 1_ contour, gesture, embodied vision, tre...
- DAY 2 - modelling and value
- Day 3 - value continued
- Drawing day 6_ sighting.pdf
- Collected sources for children's games.pdf

[Artist Pigments & Dyes - Pigment Database](#)

- stab binding demo.pdf

Readings

- John Berger-drawing.pdf
- john-berger-drawn-to-that-moment.pdf
- Drawings and Calamities, Renee Gladman.pdf
- PONGE-Nature-Things.pdf
- Interaction of Color_ 50th Anniversary Edition ...
- the-natural-way-to-draw - Kimon Nicolaides.pdf
- amy sillman-shape zine 2.pdf

Video

[John Berger / Ways of Seeing , Episode 1 \(1972\)](#)

Class playlist

- Class playlist fall 2024

You need to show up to class every week with these items to get credit in the course:

your complete work due for that class
18"x24" newsprint pad
graphite sticks
pen
graphite pencils
vine charcoal
compressed charcoal
eraser

What do we do in STUDIO FOR DRAWING?

Actions

observe details
practice

Elements

light
materiality
embodied and encultured eye
imagination

9/10 Day 0: contour and touch

- Introduction to each other
- Introduction to Class
- Presentation on mark making
- Contour demo

Assignment 1: blind contours of chosen tree

Two blind contour drawings of a single tree - one encompassing the entire tree, one of just a section.

Remember that you are only drawing “blind” insofar as you are attempting to *touch* your subject matter, rather than see it.

Spend 1 hour for each drawing. Time yourself.

Use pen on fine paper (mixed media pad, bristol, etc.) Dimension your paper to at least 18x24”.

See demo for reminders: [PDF Blind contour demo.pdf](#)

| | Subject matter | Time | Technique | Media |
|----------------|----------------|------------|----------------------|--|
| Tree I | Tree (close) | 30 minutes | Blind contour in pen | dimensioned fine drawing paper at least 18 x 24” and pen |
| Tree II | Tree (far) | 30 minutes | Blind contour in pen | dimensioned fine drawing paper at least 18 x 24” and pen |

~and~

Purchase materials: 4B graphite sticks, pens, roll of Strathmore 400 paper.

9/17 Day 1: drawing is a mountain

I can take you to the mountain and suggest different routes; but there’s no way to truly understand the mountain except by CLIMBING IT. Only you can climb it.

Assignment 2: tree part two

Read:  **John Berger-drawing.pdf** (7 pages)

~and~

Walk to the MFA Boston 465 Huntington Ave and see the Hyman Bloom drawings. It is just one small room, it should take no more than 20 minutes to get a good sense of what they are doing. They are to the left when you walk in; ask a staff member how to get there!

~and~

Make three drawings of the same tree from last week.

TIME YOURSELF!

Use 18*24 mixed media paper for your first two drawings. Use paper that you dimension yourself for your third drawing. Minimum 18" in one dimension (height or width).

Follow this schedule for the homework. You can do near/far drawings in either order, but save the two-hour drawing for the end. I recommend drawing over **THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS**.

This is not the kind of work that you can rush the day before class. It's also not reading, you can't skim it.

You need to allocate four hours of your week to be *completely present in time and space with your tree and media*.

Follow this schedule.

| | Subject matter | Time | Technique | Media |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------|--|----------------|
| Day one: drawing 1 (1 hour) | Tree (close) | 30 minutes | Blind contour in pen | pen |
| | | 30 minutes | Elaborate from the line, with graphite | graphite stick |
| Day two: drawing 2 (1 hour) | Tree (far) | 30 minutes | Blind contour in pen | pen |
| | | 30 minutes | Elaborate from the line, with graphite | graphite stick |
| Day three: drawing 3 (2 hours) | Tree - your choice of composition | 1 hour | Blind contour in pen | pen |
| | | 1 hour | Elaborate from the line, with graphite | graphite stick |

9/24 Day 2: Modeling and value touching the surface of forms, rendering light, the crumpled paper

Assignment 3: the crumpled paper

Part one

Dimension three pieces of paper so that they are 12" x 12" square. You could cut a page from your media pad in half if you would like. The three pieces of paper should be the **same size**.

Fold, crease, crumple, unfold, and generally ruin the flatness of one piece of paper. It should be rumpled, ruffled, ridged, and altogether dimensional. **Take a spot light and shine it on your crumpled paper, so that it develops dark shadows and reflective highlights – you want to maximize the dynamic range of your crumpled paper.** Use a desk lamp, a flashlight, a reading light, or a phone light. Angle it so that the light shines across the surface of your crumpled paper.

Using one page of your uncrumpled paper as your support, draw your crumpled paper. Use compressed charcoal and your kneaded eraser. I suggest preparing your paper with a ground before beginning to carve out the highlights and shadows. Pay attention to the range of values present. Think of this as a trompe l'oeil challenge. I want to be convinced that your perfectly flat paper has transformed into crumpled paper.

Be precise.

Part two

Repeat, but this time **do not shine a spotlight on your crumpled paper.** Try to minimize the dynamic range of your subject. **Be precise.**

| | Time | Subject matter | Media | Technique | Goal |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Crumpled paper I | 1 hour - 3 hours | Crumpled paper 12"x12" <i>with</i> a spotlight to maximize dynamic range | 12" x 12" fine drawing paper, compressed charcoal, kneaded eraser | Prepare a ground first, then replicate the light reflected by the crumpled paper on your uncrumpled paper. | Precise rendering of light. Think of it as a trompe l'oeil challenge. Convince me that your perfectly flat paper has transformed into crumpled paper. |
| Crumpled paper II | 1 hour - 3 hours | Crumpled paper 12"x12" <i>without</i> a spotlight to minimize dynamic range | 12" x 12" fine drawing paper, compressed charcoal, kneaded eraser | Same as the first, but this time you will be working within a narrow dynamic range. This will be more challenging than the first, because the gradations in value will be more subtle. | Precise rendering of light. |

10/1 Day 3: value continued

assignment 4: value studies

| | Time | Subject matter | Media | Technique | Goal |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---|---|---|--|
| Interior - Value Study I | 1-2 hour | An interior space you live in - this could be a bedroom, hallway, bathroom, etc. Light your subject so that you have consistent conditions. | Dimensioned fine drawing paper - at least 18x18 (larger). EXPERIMENT with your pages dimensions. | Prepare a ground first. Then articulate the values in your subject matter as precisely as possible. Use your eraser, use compressed charcoal. | Precise rendering of space and form, via light. Develop a subtle sense of dynamic range and the infinite grays given to us by light. |
| Interior - Value study II | 2-3 hours | The same interior space. | Dimensioned fine drawing paper - your choice of dimensions. (smaller is OK.) | This time integrate cross hatching or another new strategy to modulate value. Use whatever materials you wish - pen, graphite, charcoal. | Ditto. |

AND

Buy yourself some sumi ink and a cheap, large brush watercolor - around size #10 or #12 round synthetic bristle would be good! See materials list for suggested link for ink.

~~10/8 Day 4: figure drawing 1 Edward Liang, He/him - clothed~~

10/15 Day 5: figure drawing 2 Edward Liang, he/him - nude

assignment 5: [fragments of a gesture / children's games](#)

~and~

assignment 6: Three-slide presentations

1. Visit the Art21 collection of artist videos on drawing: [Drawing — Art21](#). Each video takes a different artist's practice as its subject. All of these artists draw.
2. Choose an artist from the collection. Watch their video, and then research the artist.
 - a. GO TO THE LIBRARY. Ask the librarian to show you where to find books on this artist.
 - b. Collect photos from the books. You can use your phone or a flatbed scanner.
 - c. See if the artist has a website with information on their practice. Search for interviews.
3. Make a 3 slide presentation on this artist, with a focus on **drawing's role in their practice**.
 - a. Are drawings preparatory? Are they a means or an end? What kind of time do they draw in? Where do they draw? What do they draw with? What is their language?
4. THREE SLIDES! No more no less. These are short presentations!

10/22 Day 6: color workshop; mixing demo; sighting demo; mini-presentations (½); the figure in space - library cart

assignment 7: continue work on [fragments of a gesture / children's games](#)



10/29 Day 7: mini-presentations (½); review children's games; introduce palette landscape; continue sighting practice w/ value

assignment 8: Continue work on [fragments of a gesture / children's games](#)

11/5 Day 8: visit Fogg

assignment 9: Complete [fragments of a gesture / children's games](#); begin mixing colors for your palette landscape

11/12 Day 9: figure drawing 3 - with color Cas Berta, they/them - nude

assignment 10: palette landscape

11/19 Day 10; figure drawing 4 Edward Liang, he/him - nude

assignment 11: finish palette landscape

11/26 Day 11: japanese book binding demo; in class work time

assignment 12: [final project](#)

12/3 Day 12: In-class final

assignment 13: [final project](#)

12/10 Day 13: review final projects / end of class celebration