

MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art



"Button Coat with Superstrings," Margaret Davidson, Colored pencil on paper.

Margaret Davidson: Leading with Drawing

August 5, 2023 – October 1, 2023

About *Leading with Drawing*

The exhibition offers a double take on drawing, by featuring a selection of the artist's works in conversation with drawings from MoNA Permanent Collection, specially hand-picked by Davidson herself. Many of these pieces have never been seen before.

"Drawing is experiencing an unparalleled surge in the world."



"Plaid Spiral," Margaret Davidson, 2014, colored pencil on paper.

Artist Biography

Margaret Davidson has a BFA from the University of Michigan and an MFA from the University of Washington. She is both an artist and illustrator, and, until retirement in 2014, taught courses in Beginning Drawing, Sources of Modernism in Drawing, Aesthetics of Drawing, and various drawing technique classes at Gage Academy of Art in Seattle, Washington.

On Drawing

All text excerpted from Contemporary Drawing: Key Concepts and Techniques by Margaret Davidson:

Contemporary artists are increasingly discovering that drawing is something unique and different from painting. It is intense, sensitive, compelling, personal, and an utterly direct art form, one with its own concepts, characteristics, and techniques.

How something is drawn makes something so significant and able to stand on its own. Artists make choices about surface, type of mark making, space, composition, scale, materials, and intentionality which are essential for creating images and meaning. Artists consider how they are going to draw, not just what to draw.

The most important overarching concept of contemporary drawing is intentionality, from artists choosing one surface over another, one scale over another, one material over another. Choosing to do things randomly or telling chance to guide your hand is still choosing. It is an intentional act.



*"Button Sticks," Margaret Davidson, various dates,
Ink or colored pencil on various sticks.*

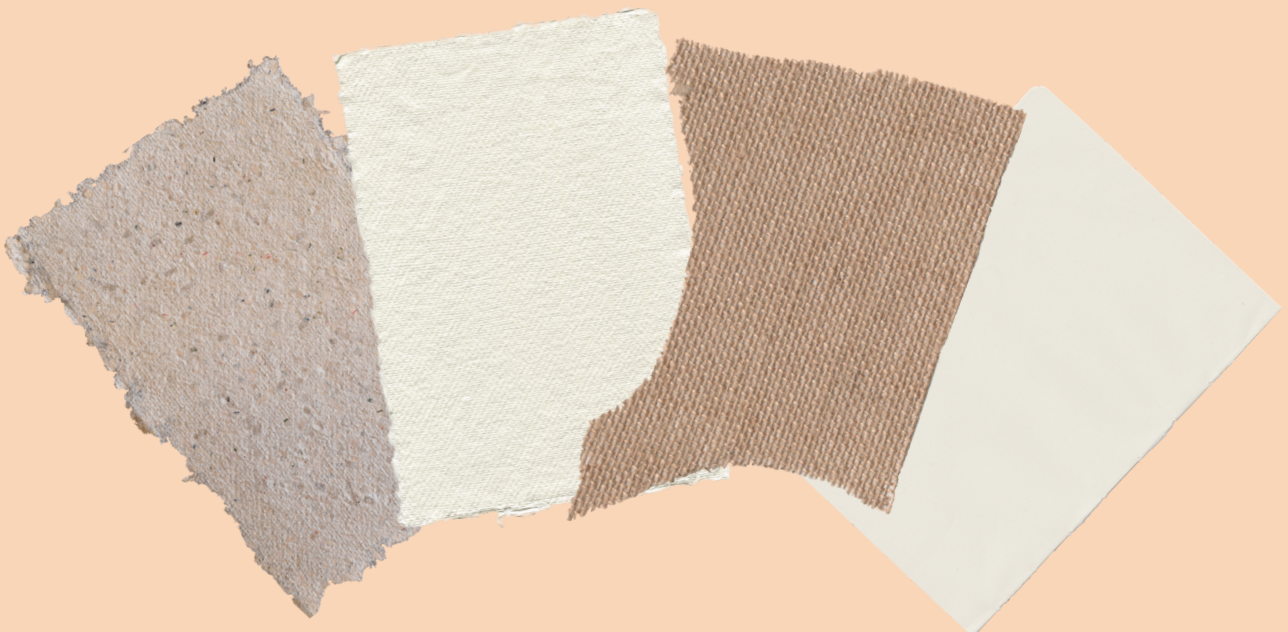
SURFACE

The surface directly influences the marks and the choice of drawing materials. Smoother paper allows marking to flow in an uninterrupted way - whereas textured papers have their own voice.

The choice of surface happens at the beginning of any drawing project and is made as the artist plans what the drawing is about. The surface will influence the marks in ways both surprising and exciting.

What types of surfaces do you see in the pieces in the gallery?

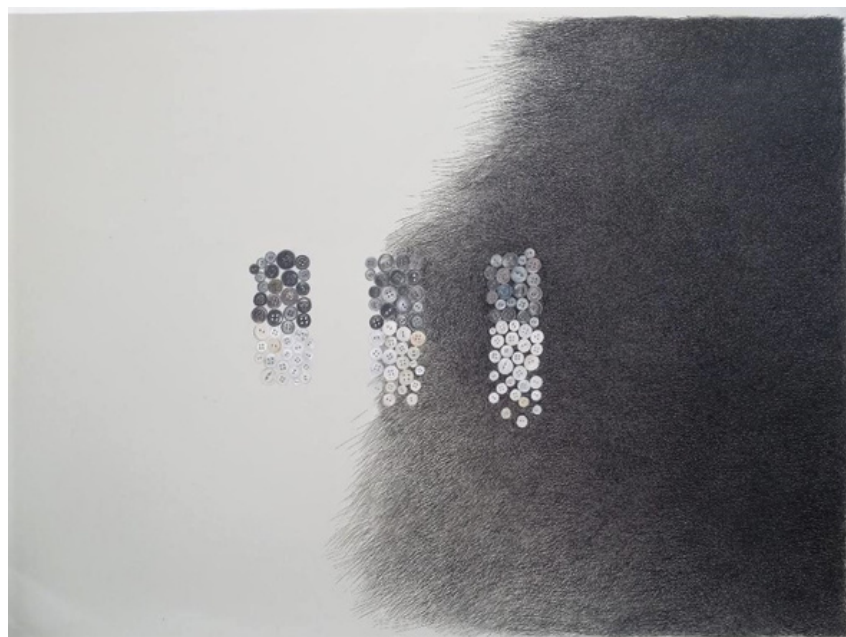
- * **Are they smooth or rough?**
- * **How are the marks different on different surfaces?**



MARKS

Every kind of drawing tool makes lines, and every kind of drawing artist uses lines in one way or another. Line indicates the shape of something, the movement of a form, or even movement itself. Line can go anywhere and do anything, and it can convey most every kind of form, space, distance, texture, and emotion. Tone conveys lightness or darkness, weightlessness or heaviness, and dullness or shine. Line and tone are often worked together.

How effective marks are has to do with how artists draw them, and where they put them. Composition is the positioning of marks with regards to space, the boundary edge, and the other marks. Only through the effective and conscious use of composition can the artists' marks relate to the space they live and breathe in, and thereby work the way they are intended to work.



*"Dark Matter, Dark Energy IV," Margaret Davidson,
2023, colored pencil and ink on paper.*

PAPER

“Today artists have an overwhelming array of papers to choose from - papers from Asia, Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Middle East. To know how to choose, it’s necessary to know a little something about what the papers are made of, and especially what their properties are.”

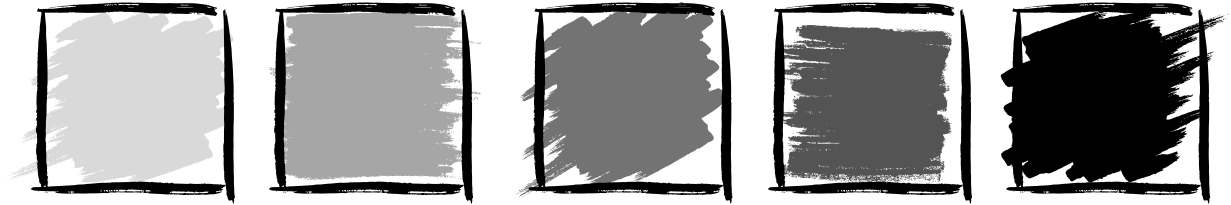
Technically paper is made from pulp that consists of water combined with fibers of some sort that have been broken apart and beaten down to separate individual filaments. Then some of the pulp is lifted from its vat with a framed screen, The water drains away leaving a thin layer of filaments matted together on the screen. This thin layer is a sheet of paper.



MATERIALS TO DRAW WITH

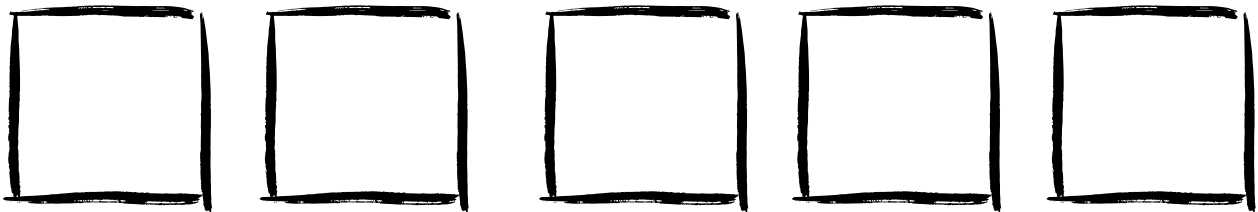
Art materials are tools that can be used from celebrating the traditional to breaking all the rules. Information about art materials is helpful to all kinds of artistic thinking. Learn what works for you, experiment with new things, and always question what seems to be holding you back. There is, no doubt, a way around or through to where you want to go, something else that will help make your ideas work.

Experiment with drawing tools and value scales

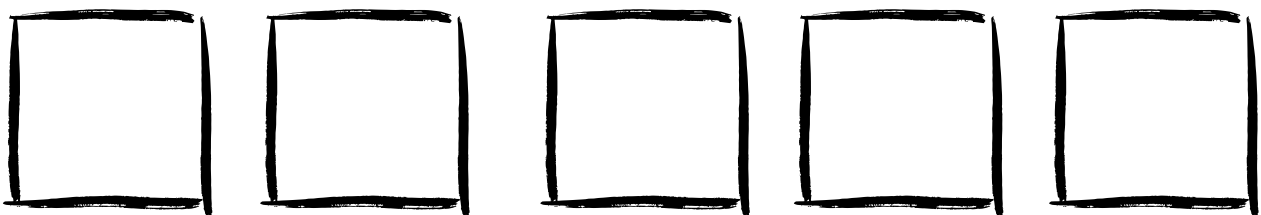


This is an example of a value gradient. In art, the word "value" describes how dark or light a given color is. Different drawing materials have strengths and limitations in the values they can give you. Use the space below to experiment with different drawing materials and their values.

Drawing material: _____



Drawing material: _____



LEARNING INTENTIONALITY

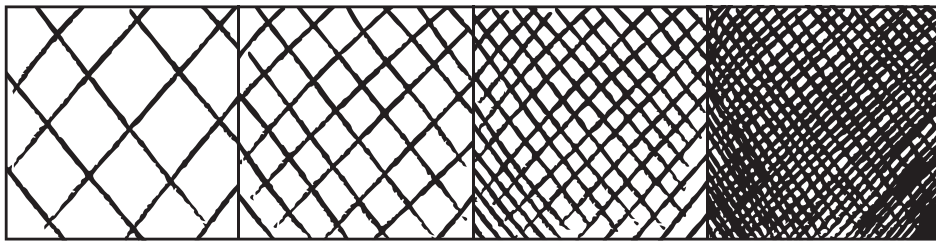
"Intentionality is a state of mind wherein decisions about drawing are made consciously, in full awareness of the effects every decision has on every other decision."

To start understanding a drawing you are looking at, make a list of everything that you see. Then ask the following questions, which all boil down to why the artist is doing what they are doing. By making the list and asking the questions, the first thing that you will notice is that you are spending much more time looking at and studying a single drawing than you ever did before. At the same time you are studying the drawings of others, assess your own work to improve your work.

- Has the artist shown a relationship between the negative spaces and the forms?
- Has the artist shown a relationship between the surface and the mark?
- Is it clear to you why the artist has chosen certain materials and a certain surface?
- Has the artist been clear in how space is depicted? For instance, is the space illusional or flat or both, and does it seem to be on purpose?
- What is the message and is it clear?
- What helps, or hurts, the clarity of the message?

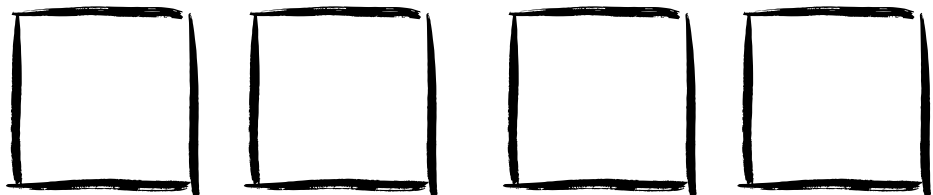
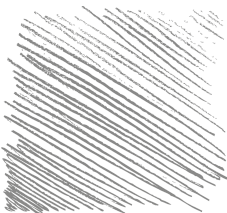
Intentional Mark-Making

Artists use many different kinds of marks in their pieces to create value, texture and pattern. Below is an example of a value gradient using cross-hatching, or intersecting sets of parallel lines. By drawing the lines closer to each other and increasing the number of lines, you create a darker value.

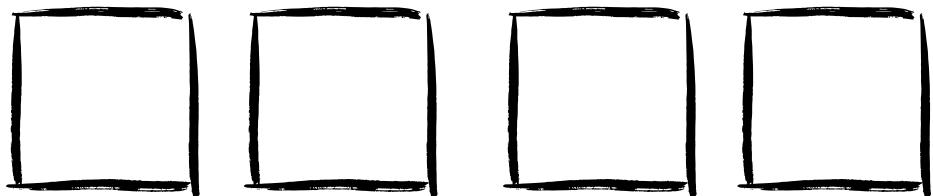
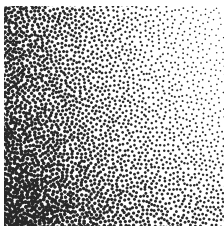


Use the space below to create value gradients using different types of marks. What patterns and textures do you see emerge?

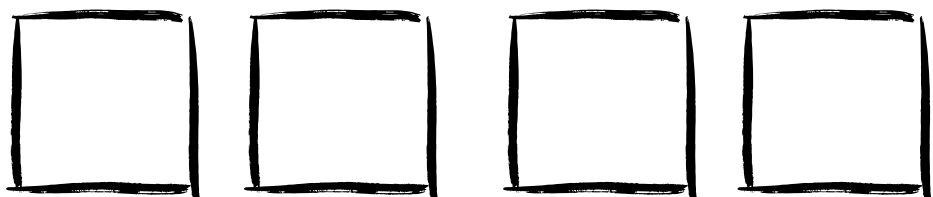
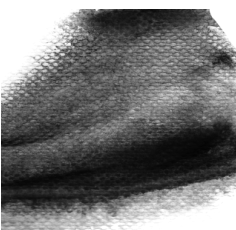
Hatch: lines drawn parallel



Stipple: small dots or specks



Smudge: use your finger to drag the pigment and create value



Artist Statement

I am interested in the interplay between the drawing mark and the surface. This interplay happens in every kind of drawing whether realist or abstract; I choose to work with it within the still life genre, which is, strangely enough, the realm of art that I find most subtle and exciting, because, as you no doubt already know, still life is not just about the stuff, but also about who collected the stuff and put it there.

I am also interested in the relationship in drawing between illusion and reality. I think that the fact that the drawing mark and the surface are real, while the image created by them is illusory, is intriguing. This is why I draw on things other than paper, things like wooden sticks and bowls and dried leaves. In these cases the surfaces are such active participants in the drawings, they have louder voices than paper usually has, and they do not remain silent.

About the button drawings. There are a variety of drawings, both on paper and on things like peeled wooden sticks that depict layers of shirt buttons. The meaning of the buttons is not always the same.

In the beginning, back in 2002, I chose to draw buttons because I found them to be a present-day version of an ancient design symbol known as the 'circle-dot'. This symbol has been found all over the world, and has been used as a design element in every society and civilization. I found buttons useful as a way to explore that symbol in a contemporary setting. Even after twenty-one years of drawing buttons, I continue to find their relationship to the circle-dot pertinent and interesting.

Buttons sometimes stand for women's work. They signify the many centuries of unnoticed labor on ordinary, daily, household chores. It is a labor that quietly keeps the world in order, and, as with many repetitive tasks, sometimes lets the mind soar to universal or cosmic heights. As it happens, drawing lots of buttons might be another form of women's work, as it is just as tedious, but also just as rewarding. Buttons also serve as a form that, whether drawn very realistically or in the simplest and most abbreviated way, speaks to the viewer as a recognizable thing, a small, flat disc that could conceivably be really there. However it is always *drawings of* buttons, and never real ones, that are in the art. And, drawings of buttons are illusions of buttons. I like to contrast this illusion with the actual reality of the surface they are drawn on, or the actual reality of the materials they are drawn with, in a search for that balancing moment when the eye and the mind see both illusion and reality at the same time.

While the above meanings come and go in various drawings, one interpretation is always there in all the drawings: the buttons indicate a human presence. Whether the drawing is on paper or wood or a dried leaf, the hand-drawn buttons indicate the overwhelming influence of human beings on all of nature, both by being a machine-made ubiquitous thing, and by being hand-drawn by this particular human.

What's happening at MoNA?

Scan this QR code to visit our Event Calendar!

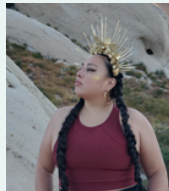


Upcoming Classes



Flower Mosaics with Katie Walton

August 26, 2023
1:00 - 3:30 PM



Intergenerational Crown Making

September 9, 2023
2:00 - 4:00 PM



Drawings are For All of Us One at a Time:

Lecture by Margaret
Davidson

September 23, 2023
1:00 - 3:30 PM



Drawing Exploratory:

Class by Margaret
Davidson

September 30, 2023
11:00 AM - 5:00 PM

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