

Upper Gallery

1. **Lucy Skaer**, *Available Fonts*, 2017, chine-collé of etching, wood engraving and found material on paper, dimensions variable

‘These works are based on all the black drawings I’ve done. The imagery is assembled vertically, a little like totem poles, sometimes with the image scrambled/not in the right order. I think of them a little like visual nonsense poems or notes to self. They are combined with other imagery, from wooden effigies found in the Seine, illustrations of dovetail joints, and a comprehensive guide to ferns from 1856...’ – Lucy Skaer

2. **Wura-Natasha Ogunji**, *The proof, an undersea volcano, attraction, extraction, distraction*, 2017, thread, ink and graphite on architectural tracing paper, 152 x 366 cm

‘More recently I have become interested in the drawing as an object. One thing I have always loved about this trace paper is that it moves. [...] The flow of air in a gallery moves them. It’s a slow, measured kind of movement, like breathing.’ – Wura-Natasha Ogunji

3. **Kathy Prendergast**, *Atlas*, 2016, 100 copies of the AA Road Map of Europe, ink, trestle tables, overall display dimensions variable

The daylight on the maps’ surfaces reveals the information which has been obliterated by the action of drawing over with ink: the transformation of geographic information into an abstract night sky is reflective and unstable, changing under different light conditions and our viewing position relative to the horizontal page.

4. **Ciprian Mureşan**, *Palimpsest, Artforum November 2007 (1)*, 2016; *Palimpsest, Artforum March 2008 (2)*, 2016, graphite pencil on paper, 140 x 210 cm each

‘With the palimpsests, I was looking at how much information I can filter through drawing, working at the threshold of recognisability.... Inevitably a filter is at work, memory collects fragments from and redistributes emphases within the practices I study and copy.’ – Ciprian Mureşan

5. **Ian Kiaer**, *Endnote (panoramico)*, 2018, mixed media installation, dimensions variable

‘The model can introduce monumentality while remaining fragile. It speaks to power from a position of weakness and, in that way, has the potential for critique.’ – Ian Kiaer

6. **David Musgrave**, *Repaired plane no. 4*, 2018, graphite on paper, 70.7 x 55 cm; *Spirit plane no. 3*, 2015, graphite on paper, 104.8 x 74.4 cm

‘I don’t know if my work is a splinter of authentic humanity in the reductive machinery or more of the binary paste it extrudes. I’m seduced by industrial materials and production methods, but feel I have to make as much as possible by hand...’ – David Musgrave

8. **Nidhal Chamekh**, *Le Battement des Ailes XVI*, 2017, graphite, ink and photo transfer on cotton paper, 23 x 32.5 cm; *Le Battement des Ailes D*, 2017, graphite, ink and photo transfer on cotton paper, 100 x 140 cm

These drawings offer the artist’s perspective on reality by presenting an imaginary or fantastical fusion of objects, histories and people sourced from archives and image banks. The montage process characteristic of the series creates an imaginative space by juxtaposing disparate things that cannot logically be connected.

Middle Gallery 2

10. **Milano Chow**, *Façade I*, 2018; *Entryway (Push/Pull Doors)*, 2017; *Frame/Exterior 1*, 2017; *Entryway (Niches)*, 2017, graphite, ink, Flashe and photo transfer on paper, 81.3 x 61 cm each

‘I love Gene Moore’s work; he was a window dresser for Tiffany’s and made these dramatic displays with floating mannequin hands and fruit and really charged objects. [...] The department store window is tied into the history of urban design, which was linked to this new way of experiencing a city through looking.’ – Milano Chow

12. **Massinissa Selmani**, *Récit d’Arrangements I, III, V, and VIII*, 2017, graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 42 x 52 cm, each work

‘The aim of this series is to create a situation that is unlikely to happen in real life, through the juxtaposition of different press clippings. Every character comes from a different press photography source. The idea is to avoid their specific contexts and to create a new one, between reality and fiction.’ – Massinissa Selmani

13. **David Haines**, *Meatboy and Bob Starr*, 2016, pencil on paper, 140 x 201 cm; *Still Life with Flyer (Fur Real)*, 2017, pencil on paper, 36 x 27.5 cm; *Still Life with Flyer (Habibi)*, 2017, pencil on paper, 36 x 27.5 cm

14. **ruby onyinyechi amanze**, *that low hanging kind of sun, the one that lingers two feet above your head, (never dying) house plants in exchange for your freedom... orchids in exchange for your love, who are you kissing, when you kiss a mask?*, 2015, photo transfers, collage, ink, metallic pigment, graphite and coloured pencil on paper, 182.9 x 301.6 cm

‘The drawing participates in its own making. I engage in a dialogue where the materials, forms and narrative inform me of what they need to be. I may begin with pieces of a story, but in the process of making, we spiral into this other world. We create our own journey.’ – ruby onyinyechi amanze

15. **Nidhal Chamekh**, *Trois Poses de Fadhel Sassi*, 2016, burned bread and charcoal on canvas, 182.5 x 210 cm, each canvas

‘I lived with these photos, I knew them and I reworked all of them. Here we find both fragmentation and assemblage within the same sequence. Originally these photos were taken one after another by a photographer who did not move; I reframed them to add movement.’ – Nidhal Chamekh

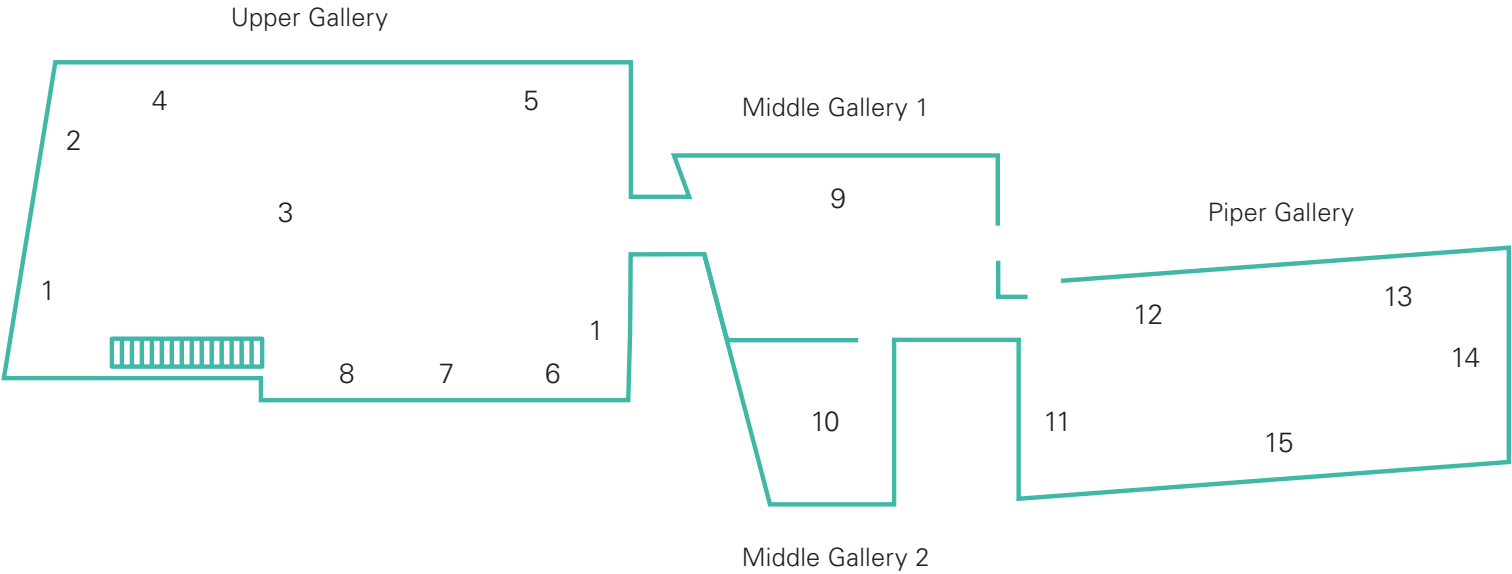
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Middle Gallery 1

9. **Karl Haendel**, *Weeks in Wet Sheets*, 2015, works on paper and cardboard elements, installation, dimensions variable

‘I’m not the author of the image. The image belongs to the culture at large, and I am only involved in the chain of passing it on.’ – Karl Haendel

The artist has discussed his working process in which ‘the rendering of the image becomes a memorial to its loss.’ He believes that his ‘drawings have the quality of a tribute.’

EXHIBITION NOTES

MODERN ART OXFORD

"Do not ... think that you can learn drawing, any more than a new language, without some hard and disagreeable labour."
– John Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing: in three letters to beginners* (1857)¹

The art historian Howard Singerman has analysed the evolution of the teaching of drawing in art schools across the 20th century. He writes: 'I have often noted the decentring of representational drawing as the core and foundation of the artist's training. It is now a particular and often optional skill, something one might use, like the ability to cast fibreglass resin or to weld... [Drawing] is taught, not as a way of remaking the world, but as a way of seeing.'² This categorisation of drawing as an optional – rather than foundational – material practice is crucial to its trajectory throughout the 20th century and into the present day. As a way of thinking about the world, rather than simply representing it, many artists now approach drawing as something to be precisely realised, and informed by their work in other disciplines, such as performance, film, sculpture and photography. When they produce hyperreal or trompe l'oeil drawings, it is a decisive choice to embrace representational skill, and its turbulent history within modern and contemporary art.

Artist Massinissa Selmani comments: 'People often speak to me about the spontaneity of drawing, but for me drawing is something extremely thought out. There is a form of spontaneity in sketching but even this spontaneity does not come from nowhere, it represents hours of work which, at a given moment in time, are materialised. To strip something down, to eliminate certain elements is a slow process and it is generally at this moment that the relationship with the medium takes place, generating those forms where the stages of the work sometimes remains visible.'³

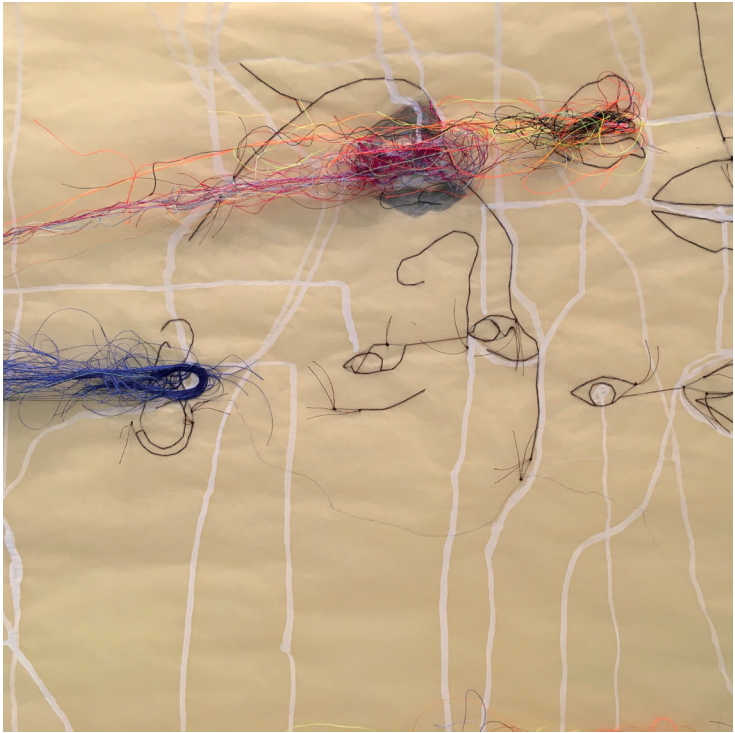
Selmani's invocation of slowness as a guiding principle for his drawing practice is crucial. He shares with many artists in this exhibition a level of care that is invested in the finished image. By slowing down our relationship with image production, these works of technical feats and visual prowess are not hollow celebrations of the artist's hand, but rather a reminder to value new perspectives on dominant cultural narratives.

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Cover images: **ruby oninyechi amanze**, *that low hanging kind of sun, the one that lingers two feet above your head, (never dying) house plants in exchange for your freedom... orchids in exchange for your love, who are you kissing, when you kiss a mask?*, 2015. Courtesy of the artist and Tiwani Contemporary.

Kathy Prendergast, *Atlas*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist and Kerlin Gallery, Dublin.

This exhibition is framed by the cultural and educational history of drawing in Oxford. The Ashmolean and Christ Church Picture Gallery's collections of historic works on paper are vital legacies of this city's preoccupation with the drawn medium throughout the centuries. *A Slice through the World* also updates and challenges some of the ideas tested during an important moment in Modern Art Oxford's history: the gallery's last group exhibition to focus on the medium. In 1972 [*Drawing*] argued for the medium's significance at a time when conceptual art and ideas were prioritised over artistic skill. That exhibition also foregrounded drawing's ability to offer an international perspective on the avant-garde, at a time when this remained unusual in the UK's contemporary art scene.



Wura-Natasha Ogunji, *The proof, an undersea volcano, attraction, extraction, distraction*, 2017 (detail). Courtesy the artist and 50 Golborne, London.

drawings. *A Slice through the World* looks to the 'specifics' of drawing: the theoretical and material aspects that are intrinsic to the work that drawing does. The recent and new works assembled in this group exhibition pay close attention to drawing's ability to articulate the complexities of both the past and present. The artists make clear their interest in many historic drawing approaches and techniques, through their return to the seemingly 'conventional' materials of paper, pencil and other humble tools of drawing. As an ancient communication technology that predates the written word, drawing's links to the past are dynamic and subject to constant revision in the future.

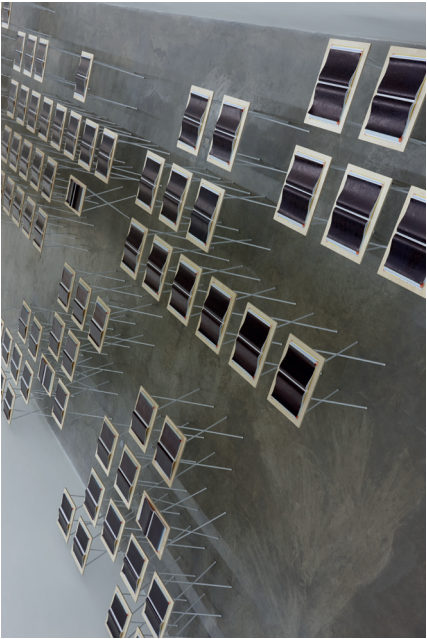
"Do we shape the world? And in the context of drawing, I wonder if the mark on the page has reverberations in the world? The question is significant for me in this moment, because for a long time I've held the belief that artists have a responsibility to do more than just reflect something about the world, that there should be a kind of shaping or making, an expansion, a making of theory."
– Wura-Natasha Ogunji, 2016

The exhibition's title, *A Slice through the World*, is inspired by 'Painting and the Graphic Arts', a short text written in 1917 by the German philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940). In it, he argues for drawing's fundamentally different perspective on the world (a horizontal slice rather than painting's vertical axis). Benjamin suggests that some drawings present cross sections of the world, and are symbolic of things in the world, acting as signs. This exhibition invokes this shared space of signs, material trace and image to act as a reminder of drawing's capacity for radical ideas. To do this, these drawings engage equally with physical and digital forms of research, ranging from photography and print journalism to architectural and environmental studies, oral histories and archives. The exhibition signals the resilience of drawing as a means of responding to contemporary questions of dialogue and representation, and shows that drawing is an inherently interdisciplinary medium that remains central to artistic practice across the world.

Drawing is not merely a preparatory activity or working process within an artist's practice. This exhibition demonstrates that it is equally an independent and accomplished means of realising highly finished works. Showcasing a return to exceptionally skilled methods of photorealist and labour-intensive drawing, these contemporary works engage with the medium's complex history as a form of apprenticed labour, and a tool of both education and communication. Drawing is equally understood in terms of its central role in other professions including architecture, cartography, design and engineering.

"I learned to believe in the drawing technique as a thinking process."
– Milano Chow, 2014

The past half-century saw many artists experiment by expanding the idea of drawing, taking flight from the confines of the page and transforming the line in space into room-filling installations, animations, films, sculptures, and wall



CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS, DRAWINGS A SLICE THROUGH THE WORLD



◆ John Ruskin, University of Oxford's first professor of fine art, opened the School of Drawing in 1871 (now The Ruskin School of Art).
■ Massinissa Selmani, *Ce qui coule n'a pas de fin*, SAM Art Prize, Paris, 2018, pp.63–4.
■ Howard Singerman, *Art Subjects: making artists in the American university*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1999, p.206.