



*Drawing on States of Mind and Being*

By Peggy Roalf

February 13, 2015



© Neil Gall, *Blind Sculpture (Dinosaur Act)*, 2011. Colored pencil on paper, 34 ½ x 27 ¼ in

From the Marble Hall, a charcoal drawing by Susan Rothenberg, the largest in the show, can be seen in its entirety. Up close, it is an explosion of bold marks; only when stepping back can a viewer assemble the image of a bicycle rider bearing down on the paper's edges. Here the show begins, with selections from acquisitions of modern and contemporary drawings made over the last ten years.

The artistic possibilities of making marks on paper is immeasurable, and become evident in the first group of drawings on display. A small piece by Bruce Connor, from 1965, whose black marks and white spaces have equal weight, seems to express the inner and outer spheres of mental space.

Russell Crotty, an amateur astronomer and an artist, takes on the heavens with *Small Atlas of Celestial Drawings* (1993). Composer and artist John Cage took his subject, 15 stones in a Japanese rock garden, literally in hand to create (*2R/4 Where R = Ryoanji*), 1983. Using a form of *frottage*, a drawing method popular with Surrealist artists, he made tracings of the rocks and reassembled them on a single sheet.

Not everything on view is so cerebral, but the extent to which pushing a pencil can open the mind quickly becomes evident. There is a section on portraits, with an early drawing by Chris Ofili, a highly finished Picasso (*Portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter*, 28 July 1936), and a Larry Rivers (*The Artist's Mother Seated in a Chair*, 1953). But there's also an ink and watercolor page by George Bazilitz, from 2006, that could be a metaphorical self-portrait: a view looking down at hairy legs and shoes, seen from high above.

Among the several cases displaying sketchbooks and single-subject explorations in bound volumes is one by Jackson Pollock, made during the time he shifted from the total abstraction of his drip paintings to semifigurative compositions. The page of delicate ink drawings on view includes references to the real world, such as an eye, ocean wave, and stars (above).

In the Marble Hall is an accordion book in which Martin Wilner, a practicing psychiatrist and an artist created a diaristic record of his travels in subterranean New York, done in excruciatingly finely detailed ink drawings that depict his fellow passengers in a manner that bridges the hyperreal and the disembodied, with fragments of overheard conversation and music leaked from headphones penned into the mix (below).

How and where artists find inspiration could be a sub-theme of the show, with a piece by Neil Gall for which he first made a Play-Doh sculpture with his eyes closed, then made an obsessively detailed color pencil drawing of it. Sol Lewitt folded and re-folded a heavy sheet of paper, sharpening some of the creases more than others to make a page whose content is defined only by the shadows it creates. Gavin Turk, one of the Young British Artists who emerged in the 1960s, placed a sheet of paper over the exhaust pipe of his van before starting the engine, creating an elegant image by chance, rather than by hand.