

IN THIS ISSUE

Drawing as Process • Heavyweight Drawing Paper • Spring/Summer Card Contest • Questions From Our Website

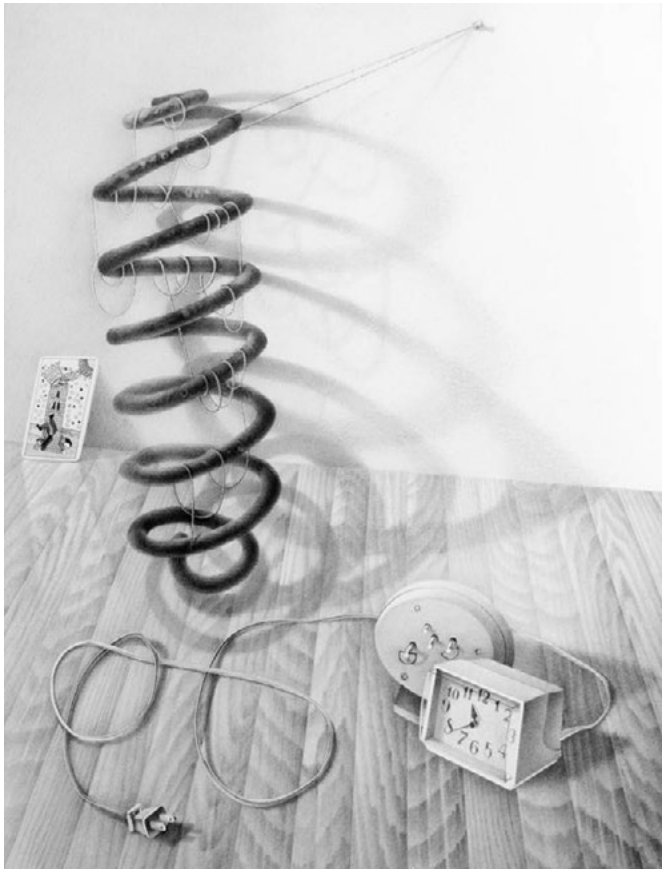
Drawing as Process

Written by: John Rise

Drawing is a decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving process. Process has been the dominant phrase in college art education for the past several years, often to the point that the process is perceived as more important than the final product. Such emphasis infers that the experience of making a drawing is more important than the finished product, and relegates the finished product to a visual document of the drawing experience employed by the drawer. So, what is the correct approach for drawing – to make drawings for the experience of drawing, or for the final product that the drawing process yields?

Over the years my drawing practices have evolved (or devolved) and the realization that the only thing consistent about my drawing practice is that it consistently changes – a realization that is often perplexing because just when I settle into a methodological approach that has proved successful, a new drawing situation presents itself and requires new resolutions to that drawing problem. Drawing is, by its very nature, a trial and error process.

That process involves finding how to manipulate the drawing tool on the surface of the paper to convincingly



John Rise



John Rise

communicate to the viewer the nature of the subject rendered, but it must also communicate the nature of the material I am drawing with. The materiality of the media is as important as the subject it is used for to depict. Thus, a graphite drawing cannot and should not try to look like a drawing done with charcoal or watercolor.

To determine what a media does and is capable of doing as a graphic language is an important part of the drawing process. For example, it has taken several years of drawing to discover, try out and finally determine that a hard finish paper suits my current graphite drawing habits best and allows me to do what I think is necessary to make the drawing successful in my mind and eye. The best paper for how I currently work with graphite is the Strathmore 500 Series Plate Finish Bristol paper. That realization is the result of the evolution of my graphite drawing practices which involve the careful build up of multiple layers with the entire range of graphite, from 9H to 9B. I also have had the advantage (or disadvantage, I sometimes think) of being introduced to serious graphite pencil drawing by an inventive and inquisitive printmaker/draftsman in college, Robert Conine, who was my Drawing instructor at Arizona State University.

Before I enrolled into his class, I perceived pencils as a pedestrian tool used for making grocery lists and preliminary layouts of a sketch for a more serious project. To me a pencil was a sketching tool, commonly available and abundant, and its use was relegated to common functions. However, Conine looked at the pencil like it was a magic wand, and in his hands it issued forth remarkable lines, shades, tones, and textures. He had a large cigar box crammed full of pencils (some even had a square lead) that he had collected while serving in the army in Germany, or while visiting his family in England. In his hands, pencil drawing was elegant, serious, beautiful. He used the tool to explore and search for different ways to make marks, accumulate layers of marks over marks, lay down a hard lead passage that was seamless, and looked as smooth as

a watercolor wash. He used templates, made templates, used forks, combs and other common, utilitarian tools as devices to assist in his drawing. He would strike a hard lead line against the edges of a serrated knife to generate endless and repetitious small wave like lines on the page.

To Robert, the subject he was drawing served as a vessel to describe with different layers of marks, strikes, stipples and crosshatches all on top of each other. The subject was not as important as the variety of marks which made up the graphic vocabulary he used to describe his subject. The drawing may have been of a soda bottle or a couple ears of decorative corn, with dry husks indicated by several parallel marks to describe them, made by notching a

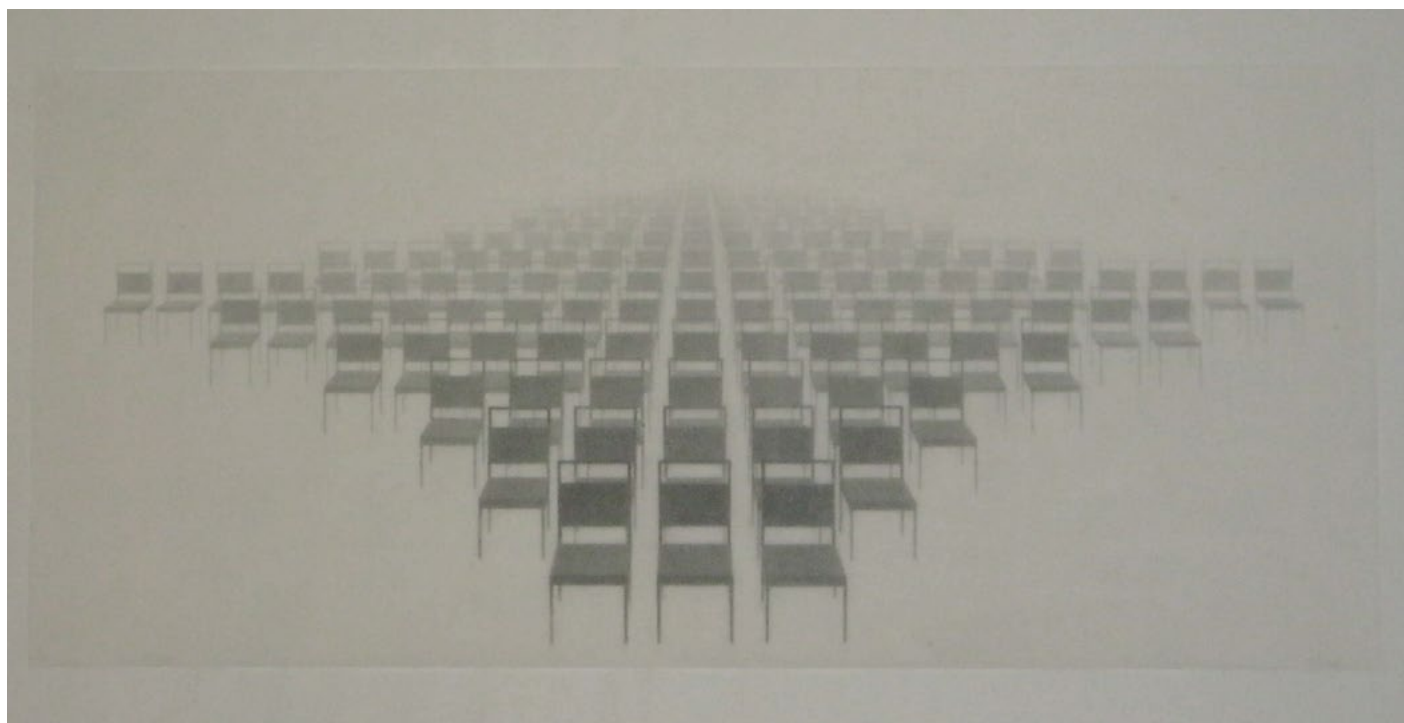


Quartercut, John Rise
Graphite on Paper

graphite stick or carpenter's pencil with a razor blade. He thought, in graphic terms, of uncommon ways to explain his subject with a tool as common as a pencil. In graphic terms, he thought out of the box before doing so was popular. As a printmaker chiefly interested in intaglio, he was accustomed to built-up surfaces of accumulated layers.

Good or bad, Conine infected me with a love for graphite drawings and graphite as a drawing media. As a printmaker, he introduced me to several different paper types; some hard, some soft, some downright flimsy and fragile, but delicate and beautiful. The papers too fragile I dismissed as a surface too delicate for graphite drawing, although my bias was challenged recently in an exhibition of graphite drawings made on a Chinese rice paper by a colleague here at SCAD (the Savannah College of Art and Design), Professor Maggie Evans, that was exquisite (see image below).

In the past I tried softer papers and found that they did not hold up to my accumulated, multiple layers, particularly the harder leads, as they would tend to lint off. I tried ironing a piece of softer cotton printmaking paper to harden the surface. Then I tried a hot press watercolor paper, but found that the fibers would slightly fray after several layers of drawing (I was using the 140# paper as it has a harder surface than the 300# hot press watercolor papers). Those single fiber frays would then grab the subsequent passes of graphite, which would accumulate and build up on that initial fray, attract more graphite during the drawing process, and result in a black spot in a passage intended to be a smooth blended area. To rid the passage of those spots required delicate erasures that sometimes made the smooth passage even worse than the spot I was trying to get rid of. The Strathmore Plate Bristol has solved that condition. In addition, the bright white of the Bristol allows even the



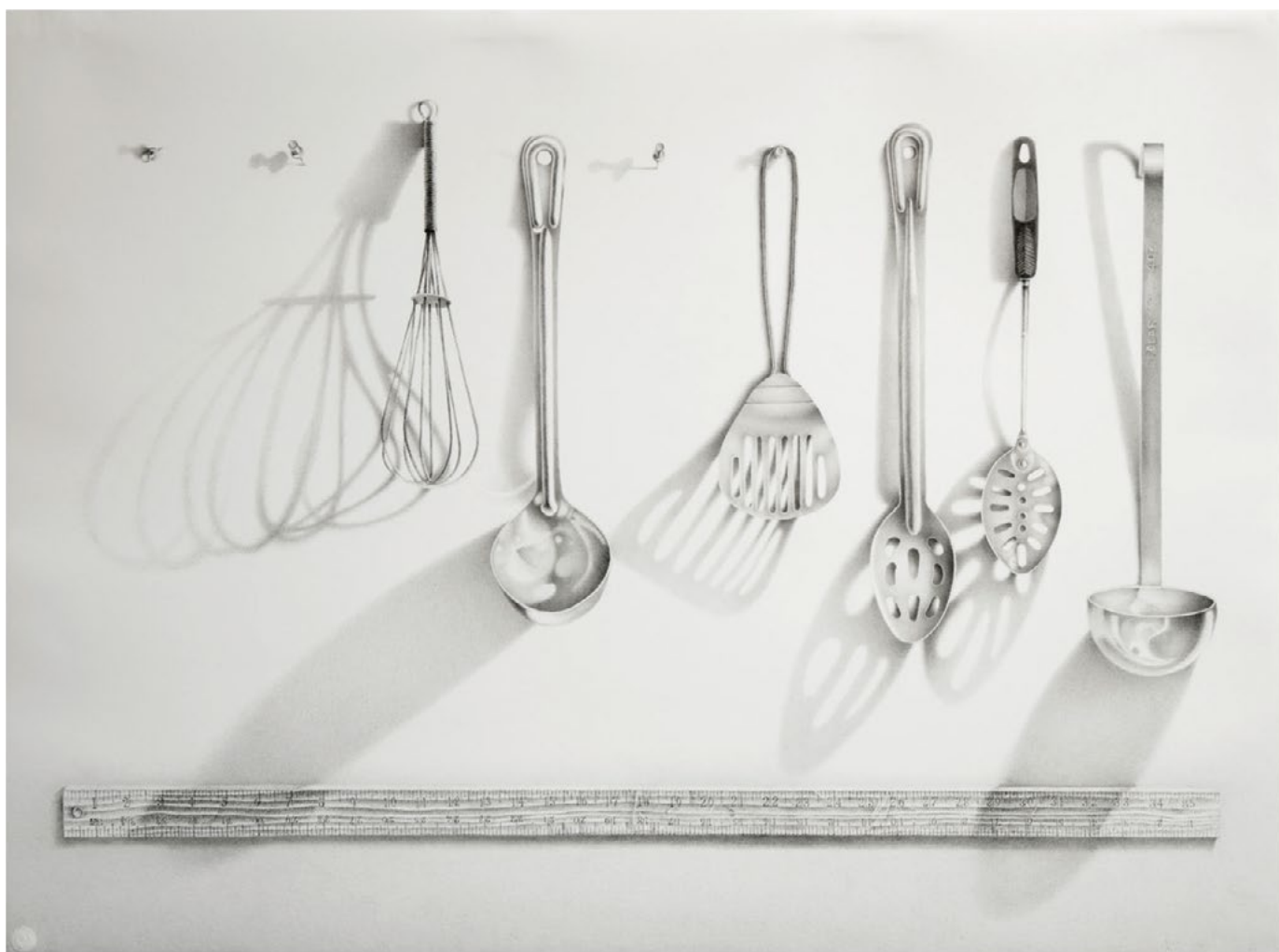
Ready, Maggie Evans
Graphite on Chinese Rice Paper

slightest graphite marks to have a presence in the drawing, and allows for tight focus, edge and detail.

This drawing process relates chiefly to a linear approach to drawing, which is only part of the story. Stephen Douglas, arguably the best living figurative painter on the West Coast, approaches drawing from a more painterly attitude. Using powder graphite he carves his figures into the page with broad strokes and pushes the graphite into the paper with his fingers, erasers and stiff tools. His finished drawings are much more visceral - they are exciting explosions of human form and graphite powder on the page, which upon closer examination, become highly focused in the facial features.

In his drawings the graphite, usually on a hard, multi-ply Strathmore Vellum Bristol paper, is atmospheric and conveys space, edge (or loss of edge) and the immediacy of the drawing medium in his hands.

These different drawing approaches have in common a continuous connection between the mentally preconceived notions of what the drawing intends to look like when complete – a sort of mental blueprint, if you will. What happens between the preconceived notion of the product and the physical realization of the final finished product is process. That process presents to the artist options and decisions that must be made during the making of the



Silver, John Rise
Graphite on Paper

drawing. Many of those choices will take the product away from the preconceived notion and into new, uncharted visual territory. They may not necessarily change the subject of the drawing, but how the subject is conveyed in visual terms with media on paper. Risk is introduced into the drawing process, which means that trying new things may lead to the failure of the drawing; but it is also possible that trying new things may make the drawing even better, make it more than what was initially preconceived.

Drawing, then, is a process and a means to examine ideas, try new things, consider alternatives; it is a way of thinking. It is a way of seeing and investigating an idea. A messy process, to be sure, that in the end records in its surface the scars of its failures and the triumphs of its successes. The immediate nature of drawing assists in the conceptualization to the finalization of the picture; it opens doors that conceptualization alone could never have envisioned, if the drawer is willing to take that gamble in the drawing process. Drawing often tells the viewer as much about the artist as it says about the subject because drawing is a process, whatever that process may be.

About the Artist

John Rise is a painter who lives in Savannah, Georgia. Rise earned his BFA in drawing from Arizona State University in 1976, and an MA in painting and drawing from the University of New Mexico (UNM) in 1977.

In 1979 Rise founded Best Artists Products, a company that designed and manufactured canvas stretcher bars and oak wood studio easels. He sold Best Artists Products to the Jack Richeson Company in 1995, where the Best product line continues today.

Rise returned to UNM in 2000 and earned an MFA in painting and drawing. During that time he taught drawing and painting classes, first as a graduate assistant and

then as an adjunct. From 2005 to present, Rise has taught drawing at the Savannah College of Art and Design where he received the 2010-11 Vulcan Materials Company Teaching Excellence Award for outstanding contribution to undergraduate education, student learning, and campus life.

Rise's recent exhibition "[Re-visit, Re-vise, Re-work, Re-present](#)" was in South Carolina at the Cecilia Coker Bell Gallery, Coker College.

In the spring of 2013 Rise was featured in an article in *Professional Artist Magazine*: "Artists As Inventors: How Innovative Individuals Have Made an Impact on the Art Supply Industry."

In the summer of 2014 Rise had a drawing featured on cover of the summer issue of *Drawing* and in a feature article "Finding Meaning in the Manmade."

www.johnrise.com





NEW!

Sarah Becktel

Heavyweight Drawing paper now available in pads!

Strathmore® 400 Series Heavyweight Drawing has been one of our most popular papers since 1940. Previously this 100 lb. (163 gsm) paper was only available in sheets and rolls. Now it is available in convenient pad format for the first time.

Products feature a more textured surface which allows for a greater depth of tone, uniform areas of half tones and less mechanical looking cross hatching. Excellent for use with pencil, colored pencil, charcoal, or sketching sticks.

Choose from 5 popular pad sizes:

8"x10"

9"x12"

11"x14"

14"x17"

18"x24"

- "Actual Size" sheets perforated for easy removal
- Acid free, cream colored paper
- 100 lb./163 g/m²
- Slightly more textured surface than our 80 lb./130 g/m² 400 Series Drawing Paper
- Durable wire binding
- Made in the U.S.A.



Call For Entries: Win Cash and Card Products!

Submit spring
and summer themed
artwork created on
any of our greeting
cards for a chance
to **WIN!**

We will be selecting **3 featured artists** from our spring/summer card artwork submissions to receive the following:

- **1st place** - Awarded **\$500, plus \$200** retail value of Strathmore® card products (chosen by Strathmore Artist Papers).
- **2nd place** - Awarded **\$250, plus \$100** retail value of Strathmore card products (chosen by Strathmore Artist Papers).
- **3rd place** - Awarded **\$100, plus \$50** retail value of Strathmore card products (chosen by Strathmore Artist Papers).

Artist(s) selected will be credited by name wherever artwork is featured. Artwork may be featured on promotional materials or on social media sites. Anyone is welcome and encouraged to submit

artwork. Style and mediums used on cards are up to the artist. The theme or subject matter should focus on spring and summer seasons. **Cards must be created on Strathmore greeting card products.** There is no fee to participate. Art will be selected based on aesthetic qualities and technical skill.

Final submission due: Friday, December 5, 2014
Image requirements:

- Artwork must be 300 dpi and saved as a .jpg file.
- File size must be 5mb or less. You can also send a .zip file if needed.
- Limit of 2 submissions per artist.

Go to www.strathmoreartist.com for details.

Entries subject to **terms and conditions**

Questions From Our Website: Printmaking Papers



You now have both cotton and wood fiber printmaking papers. What are the differences between them in terms of usage and technique?

We recently introduced a full line of printmaking papers in 300 Series, 400 Series, and 500 Series. The 300 Series is a lightweight wood pulp sheet that is best for relief printing, practicing and proofing. The 400 Series is a heavyweight wood pulp sheet that is ideal for lithography, intaglio, screen printing, and relief printing. Our 500 Series 100% cotton printmaking paper is ideal for all types of printmaking techniques.

Cotton fibers are longer, softer and stronger than wood fibers. Printmaking techniques such as intaglio (etching, aquatint, dry pint, mezzotint), lithography and to some degree relief, require paper that have soft fibers to print properly. For this reason cotton is the premier fiber, and is able to print the subtlest detail. Wood fiber printmaking papers are more affordable and can be used for the same printmaking techniques as cotton printmaking papers, but as an artist's work becomes more complex and nuanced, it usually starts to require a cotton printmaking paper.

Can or should your wood fiber printmaking papers in 300 Series and 400 Series be soaked prior to printing, and for how long?

For intaglio (and sometimes for relief and lithography), printmaking papers need to be soaked to soften the surface of the paper. This allows the paper fibers to be absorbent enough to absorb the ink when printed under great pressure. Almost all fine art papers have sizing inside and on the surface of the paper (the sizing formula regulates how the paper will absorb moisture). Printmaking papers have less surface sizing, which enables the fibers on the surface to be soft enough to absorb ink during printing. When printmaking papers are soaked in water, the water first softens the surface sizing, then the surface fibers.

The 300 Series can be dampened with a sponge, but typically lightweight printmaking papers are not soaked. The 400 Series can be soaked for 15 minutes to one hour. Printmakers usually soak their paper in a large tub of water. If the paper becomes too dry after soaking and prior to printing, a spray bottle can be used to re-moisten the sheet.

continued...

Why are there so many sizes of your printmaking papers?

Our 400 Series and 500 Series printmaking papers are available in full sized sheets. In addition, our 300 Series and 400 Series printmaking papers are available in four different pad sizes (5" x 7", 8" x 10", 11" x 14", and 18" x 24"). This saves the artists time and money.

To create a print, artists use printing elements (blocks of wood, linoleum, zinc, copper, stone, and metal plates) of various sizes. Having various sheet sizes to match the different printing elements allows the artists to choose the paper size that is most appropriate.

Presently, the standard sheet size for cotton printmaking papers sold in the U.S. is 22" x 30". The usual practice is to tear the 22" x 30" sheet in half, quarters or eighths. This can be impractical, intimidating when using expensive sheets, and not cost effective. Tearing sheets down to smaller sizes takes time and precision, and it is also hard to store large 22" x 30" sheets.

The Strathmore printmaking papers in pads come in "frame-ready" sizes. The papers are easier to store, and don't require resizing or tearing.

