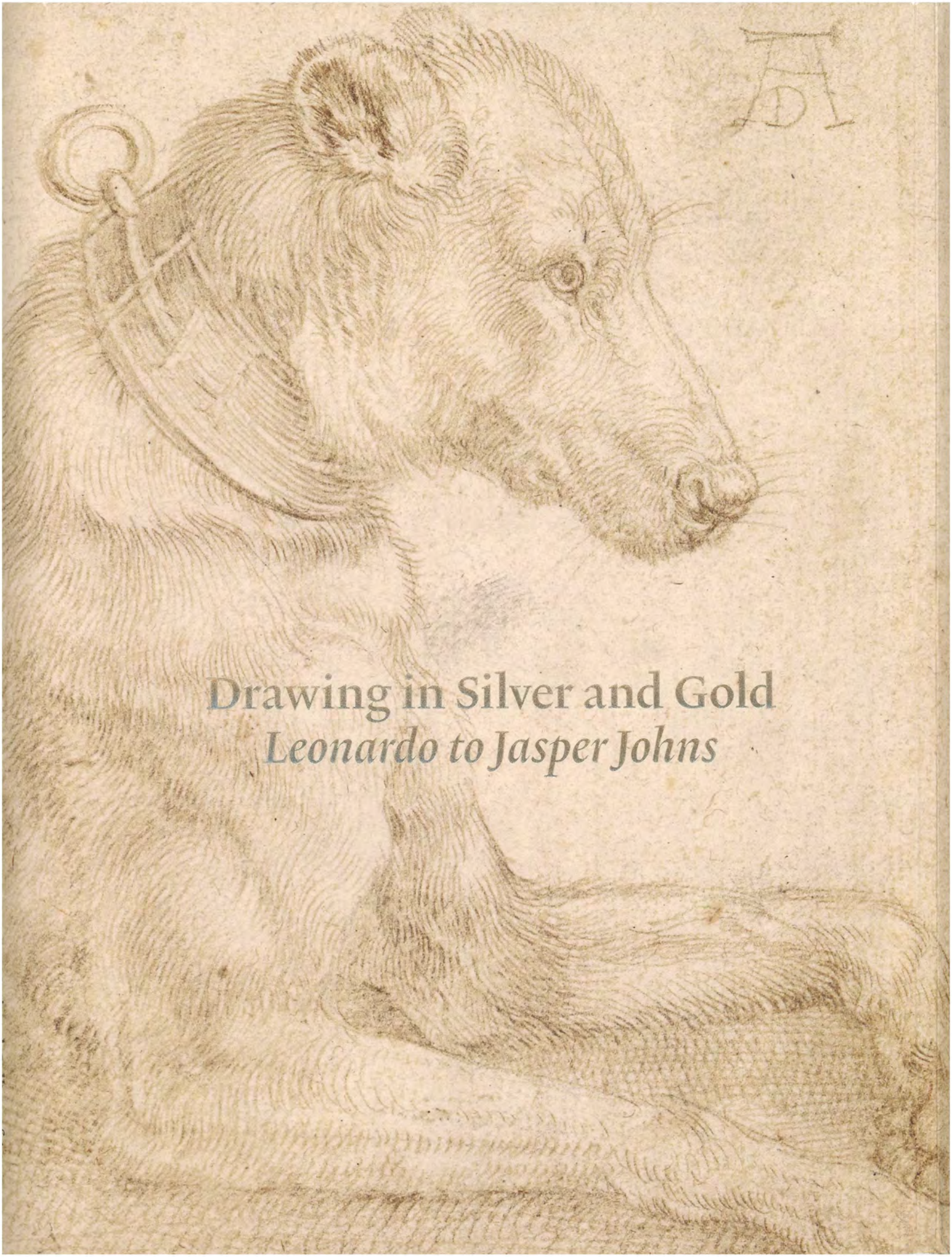

Drawing in Silver and Gold
Leonardo to Jasper Johns

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Stacey Sell
Hugo Chapman

with
Kimberly Schenck
John Oliver Hand
Giulia Bartrum
An Van Camp
Bruce Weber
Joanna Russell
Judith Rayner
Jenny Bescoby

National Gallery of Art, Washington
The British Museum, London
Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford

Joseph Stella

Modern and Contemporary Drawing in Metalpoint

Bruce Weber

American artists for more than a century have created metalpoint drawings of exceptional beauty and remarkable craftsmanship. Modern and contemporary practice of the medium has mainly been an American phenomenon, and one that is growing. The medium has served as a vehicle for advancing individual artistic expression while re-invigorating the Renaissance tradition of fine draftsmanship. In their diversity of style and range of imagery, American drawings in metalpoint belie the mistaken assumption that the use of the medium in modern art is nothing more than an echo of an archaic artistic impulse. This essay focuses on how metalpoint has been employed by American artists of differing aesthetic persuasions, and it also touches on modern and contemporary European efforts in the medium. In the past thirty years, since the exhibition at the Norton Gallery of Art titled, *The Fine Line: Drawing with Silver in America*, these efforts have expanded in areas that could not have been predicted.[1] The essay that follows takes into account many new developments in the medium and features statements by a variety of artists and critics about metalpoint drawing. Their words illuminate our understanding of how the medium has been regarded in recent history and they convey the diverse range of feelings, attitudes, and opinions about its practice.

American artistic interest in metalpoint primarily involves silverpoint. Its modern use as a drawing medium in American art dates from the mid-1890s, undoubtedly sparked by the great enthusiasm during this period for the art of the Renaissance in addition to familiarity with contemporary British efforts in the medium and an increased concern among American artists for fine draftsmanship, which developed as an outgrowth of academic training abroad. Exhibitions of Thomas Dewing's silverpoint drawings (pl. 91) and the ensuing critical praise that they received may also have inspired fellow Americans to attempt its use. Interestingly, the artist visited England in the early 1890s precisely at the time that the English artist Charles Prosper Sainton was achieving success for his silverpoint drawings, which may have spurred the American artist's enthusiasm for the medium. In 1896, Winsor & Newton is first known to have begun marketing a silverpoint kit in America, which likely

encouraged growing numbers of professionals as well as amateurs to attempt the medium. The kit included a silverpoint stylus and a sketchbook of commercially prepared paper, which was available in various sizes.

The July 1895 issue of the American periodical *The Monthly Illustrator* featured an article, "Silver-Point: A Neglected Art," and included illustrations of silverpoint portraits and genre subjects by Carl J. Becker. The article's author, Hillary Bell, reported, "During late years [*sic*] silver-point drawings have come into universal attention in Europe, through the exhibitions arranged by collectors of this archaic work. Especial interest is now shown in them by the English art-lovers; and peradventure some American devotee of the venerable in art may bring together enough examples to teach us on this side of the sea the charm that once made silver-point fashionable."[2]

America's earliest silverpoint practitioners usually rendered portraits—typically heads—of young women or girls. Thomas Dewing, Joseph Decamp, William McGregor Paxton, Philip Leslie Hale, Margaret Richardson, Willard Metcalf, Ercole Cartotto, and others sought—above all—to create elegant, refined, and poetic likenesses. They emphasized physical beauty and the soft, tremulous play of light, shadow, and tone, and they meticulously built up the coated surface with small strokes of diagonal, straight, and hatched lines. Their renderings, certainly idealized, allude to a deeper message concerning woman as the embodiment of beauty. In this, they recall Leonardo da Vinci's metalpoint drawings of women. As one American critic noted, "Silverpoint may possibly be regarded as a feminine medium, for certainly it presents femininity with extraordinary allure."[3] What the Anglo-American essayist-critic Charles H. Caffin wrote of Dewing's silverpoint heads could also be quite accurately applied to the efforts in the medium by any of his American contemporaries: "The tenderness of the silvery grey, the possibilities of effects the most intangible, the reticent suggestiveness of the means employed, seem to make the term 'a work of art' too harsh for these tiny treasures. Work suggests labor and effort, whereas these silverpoints are rather emanations of the spirit, breathed into form."[4] Both Hale (who began working extensively in silverpoint around 1915) and Cartotto are known to have closely studied the silverpoints of Leonardo.

The decade of the 1920s was marked by a renewed respect for the art of the Renaissance and fine draftsmanship by leading modernists in America.[5] Seeking to establish a link with the drawing traditions of the past, Americans John Storrs and Marsden Hartley as well as continental artists Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (known as Le Corbusier) and Gerhard Marcks employed silverpoint. At this time Joseph Stella vigorously renewed his exploration of the medium, which had originally developed around 1909 as an outgrowth of his interest in Renaissance drawing.

While living in New York in the early 1920s, Stella executed profile portraits of several of his artist and musician friends, among them Marcel Duchamp (fig. 1), Louis Eilshemius (Whitney Museum of American Art), and Edgard Varèse (Baltimore Museum of Art), which were influenced by the composition of Renaissance portrait medals. He sharply delineated the contour of forms that lay parallel to the picture

plane and employed parallel lines and crosshatching to model surfaces. In contrast to his more traditional silverpoint portraits of ten years earlier, such as *Portrait of a Bearded Man* (circa 1909, Amon Carter Museum), flatness is emphasized, and there is little differentiation of light from shadow. Stella's stark but luminous portrait of Duchamp led Gertrude Stein to proclaim, with characteristic tongue in cheek, "silver is thin."[6] Interestingly, in the early 1920s, Duchamp's close friend Man Ray briefly experimented with silverpoint, probably prompted by his close association at this time with Stella at the Société Anonyme in New York.

Fig. 1. Joseph Stella, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, c. 1922, silverpoint and graphite on prepared paper. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest

In order to exploit silverpoint's unique linear capability for rendering outline, artists have regularly positioned compositional elements in profile. The rendering of a profile likeness always requires great concentration and close coordination of eye and hand. The profile requires that the artist make a concise expressive statement of personality with the greatest economy of means. The line must be disciplined yet free and flowing. In *Self-Portrait* (pl. 92), Stella placed his head, upper body, and several of his favorite motifs in profile, and repeatedly outlined his own intense likeness, producing a rendering of great expressive force at the expense of creating a slight break in the ground. In this and other portrait drawings of the mid- and late 1920s, Stella sought to test the physical limits of his ground by forcefully digging the stylus into it, and to work on a scale larger than what is usual for the medium. The artist wrote: "for drawing I found the unbending inexorable silverpoint the efficacious tool to seize... out of reality integral caustic evidences of life. In order to avoid careless facility, I dig my roots firmly obstinately stubbornly in the crude untaught line buried in the living flesh of the primitives, a line whose purity pours out and flows so surely in the transparency of sunny clarity... I dedicate my ardent wish to draw with all the precision possible."[7]

John Storrs was principally active as a sculptor, so that his habit of using silverpoint to define the boundaries or contours of voluminous forms is natural and unsurprising. Silverpoint is well-suited to a sculptor's need to work out the relationship between edges and surfaces. Over the course of most of his career, the artist resided in France, first in Paris and then in the Loir-et-Cher village of Mer. He began drawing in silverpoint in 1926, and principally executed portraits and figure studies in the medium (pl. 93).

In Storrs's figure drawings, the point seems never to have been lifted from the page. The overall effect is one of a continuous and deceptively instantaneous gesture, suggesting volume and weight. The line is rhythmic, imbuing its subject with a sense of movement and vitality. "The glide of the silver needle over the prepared paper," Storrs remarked, "is easier than even the softest pencil, and that very smoothness invites a subtler, more flexible line. The resulting drawing is evanescent—it gives you the feeling it is about to vanish away. This delicacy helps [create] an illusion of a quick jotting down of the vivid impression or a moment."[8]

Fig. 2. Marsden Hartley, *Pumpkins and Seashells*, 1927, silverpoint on commercially prepared paper. Mrs. Duncan E. Boeckman, Dallas, Texas

Marsden Hartley developed an interest in silverpoint as a result of his friendship with Storrs in Paris in the late 1920s, and he applied an equally modern approach to the medium in drawings that he completed between 1927 and 1933. Hartley's silverpoint still lifes (fig. 2) and landscapes (pl. 94) were executed while he was living abroad, following in the footsteps of Paul Cézanne. In these works, he sought to establish a tension between naturalism and abstraction, flattening and manipulating planes, employing outline principally and a single-hatch technique of diagonally oriented strokes. Elements that are not defined by outline appear to merge with the blank areas of the paper. The artist distilled reality for expressive purposes, accenting areas that interested him and omitting parts that did not, applying the medium in an equally evocative and perceptive manner. In his landscape drawings he captured the essence or character of a location, and he often made several drawings of the same spot.

In contrast to Hartley's selective approach to form in his still lifes, the artist Leo Dee examined objects at close range and with microscopic precision. He lavishly rendered the finest and most intricate of surfaces, awakening the viewer to the surprising complexity of commonplace materials (pl. 101). Dee, who began drawing in silverpoint in 1957, worked exclusively with straight lines, building tones and modeling forms through a highly complicated network of hatching, conveying the softest and most subtle transitions of tonal values. The subjects he chose to draw, always in isolation, might be as hard as a shell or as soft as a cloth. They might be as regular in shape as a lemon or as irregular as a torn piece of paper.

Dee restricted his singular images to the center of the paper. He conveyed a feeling of density and weight, which creates the illusion that the objects stand out from the support in low relief. "In my drawings," the artist remarked, "I strive for elegance and a quality of magic. With a large, open portion of the surface, I seek to create a special universe for each object, giving it a life of its own. Finding human characteristics in a pearl or lemon, viewing landscapes in a crumbled piece of paper, I try to invoke the feeling that all nature is one."[9]

Among the European artists most interested in silverpoint in the twentieth century were Otto Dix and Avigdor Arikha. Dix had been strongly affected by his experience as a soldier in the German army in World War I, and his work would be haunted by the brutality that he witnessed. He executed more than two hundred silverpoint drawings over the course of the period between 1931 and 1944. He created portraits (pls. 95, 96), nudes, landscapes (pl. 97), and preparatory studies for paintings. Generally, he used the medium alone, but on occasion he combined it with graphite, chalk, or pen and ink. Dix became enamored with silverpoint while serving as a professor of painting at the Dresden Academy of Art. The school was a center for the study of artists' techniques and material science, especially when it was under the guidance of Kurt Wehlte, who served as professor of Material Science and Painting Techniques from 1925 to 1931. In October 1935, Wehtle published a brief article on silverpoint drawing in the periodical *Die Künstkammer* and provided valuable information on the preparation of grounds.[10] Earlier in the century, the German

Der hochberühmt Meister Lionardo und sein Genoß Lorenzo di Credi haben die fürnehmsten Köpf, Händ und Gewand und alle Creatur auf solche wunderbärliche Art durchgeführt auf fleischfarb, rot oder blob Papier, das sie nach ihr gut Behuncken fürbeten.

Und Raphael, der so hoch beim Popst ist geachtet gewest, hat sölch fürnehme Marienbild mit sambt dem Kindlein gerissen, dass nie mit der Federen oder Kohlen dergleichen kunt geschehen.

Aus dem vlamisch Land künnt ich dir nennen die zwo künstreichen Moler Van Eyck und Memling und viel andere trefflich Künstner zu der Zeit, do Keyser Friedrich der dritt regieret hat.

Auch der berühmt teutsche Moler von Nörnberg Albrecht Dürer hat sich und seine Sippschaft und ander wolgestalt Herren aus der Stadt mit dem Steft konterfet und, do er mit seim

6 7

Fig. 3. Joseph Meder, *Das Büchlein vom Silbersteft*, 1909, bound volume printed in letterpress with inserted pages of prepared paper. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

art historian Joseph Meder had similarly sought to revitalize interest in the medium in his 1909 publication *Das Büchlein vom Silbersteft* (fig. 3). Dix's initial drawings in silverpoint were undoubtedly stimulated by conversations with his Dresden Academy colleague, Wehlte, who experimented with the medium in the course of the second half of the 1920s.

In the early 1930s, Dix created silverpoint portraits of his family, himself, and others. The medium was a perfect match for his desire to see things clearly and nakedly—frankly and honestly—and to achieve the detail and precise form he observed in the art of the Old Masters. In *Old Woman* (pl. 95), he tenderly portrays the aging character of his model. Each line is crisp and distinct as he closely studied her wrinkled, furrowed, and sagging skin, as well as the irregular, sunken shape of her head. Here he exploited silverpoint's uncanny ability to render the sheen and texture of hair, and he evidently took added pleasure in delineating the loose strands that circle the edge of the old woman's right ear. The artist selectively incorporated graphite to create a greater sense of depth and plasticity, especially in the folds of his subject's eyelids, along the right side of her cheek, and along part of her right jawline.

The French-Israeli artist Avigdor Arikha developed a strong historical interest in traditional art techniques while attending the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1965 he began to work entirely from life and to picture his subjects in single sittings. Initially he made drawings with sumi ink brushed directly onto paper. Later in the decade, Arikha became interested in employing what he referred to as a "hard line" and began making drawings of his wife and family in silverpoint (pl. 99).[11] In the following decades, he turned to silverpoint in the course of shifting "from hard to soft and from soft to hard."[12] Arikha's crisp, rapidly drawn single lines are employed with great economy and have a nervous, edgy quality. The artist believed that a "good picture has to be like a laundry line, which has to be completely taut. If the line goes slack, all the laundry falls."[13]

In addition to subjects based on direct observation, metalpoint has proven to be highly suitable to conveying a psychologically jarring approach to reality. Pavel Tchelitchew and John Wilde dealt expressively with their feelings about the nature of reality, always seeking to reveal its darker side. In their drawings, the pale luminous silver conveys an eerie glow laden with mystery.

The Russian-born Tchelitchew created silverpoints in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Along with subjects of melancholy, ruin, poverty, nostalgia, and eroticism, he made portrait studies. Tchelitchew's silverpoints often feature fragments from a running scenario (pl. 98). He employed a hard, thin line on commercially prepared paper and created plunging, vertiginous effects by utilizing multiple perspectives, abrupt dislocations of scale, and dramatic foreshortening. The artist emphasized outline and selectively established shadows through parallel hatching. He established a feeling of depth and surface tension by intersecting and juxtaposing straight and curved lines to create images instilled equally with dramatic power, grace, and elegance.

The art of John Wilde is commonly associated with Magic Realism, a precise, highly detailed type of representation, rooted in Renaissance craftsmanship and based on fantasy and imagination. Wilde's interest in silverpoint began in the 1940s while he was a student, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, of James Watrous, author of an informative study of the medium in his 1957 book, *The Craft of Old-Master Drawings*.[14] Wilde's subjects, which evolved from his personal fantasies, regularly dealt with transformation—merging the bodies of people and animals (fig. 4)—and tragedy or impending tragedy, including death and aging. His technique is so exacting that we are convinced of the utter reality of whatever is rendered, whether it is based upon external fact or inner imagination. "It is 'crazy' to do silverpoint," Wilde once remarked. "It can't be corrected, and it is an intellectual method of drawing, without chiaroscuro."[15]

Fig. 4. John Wilde, *Lady Bird Series #9—Emily Egret*, 1982, silverpoint on acrylic gesso coated paper. Arkansas Arts Center, Foundation Collection: Purchase, Tabriz Fund

In the 1930s and 1940s, an increasing number of American artists became interested in Renaissance techniques and pictorial devices. Several American Scene painters tried their hand at silverpoint for independent drawings as well as preparatory studies for murals. It was during this period that Paul Cadmus began to adopt old master methods. His work in silverpoint (fig. 5) is indebted to his study of Renaissance drawings and corresponds to his use of tempera in his paintings, which requires a similar level of care and premeditation, demanding that the underdrawings be perfectly formulated into graphic elements. Cadmus studiously consulted Daniel V. Thompson Jr.'s *The Practice of Tempera Painting* after its publication in 1936. The author remarked that there "is no more delicate and beautiful instrument for drawing [than a silverpoint stylus]."[16]

Artists have frequently combined one medium or more with silverpoint, or used it in combination with other types of metalpoint. This practice generally stems from a desire to establish a more varied scheme of tonal and coloristic relationships or to

Fig. 5. Paul Cadmus, *Male Nude NM71*, 1971, silverpoint and heightened with white on paper. Purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, from the Permanent Collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts at the University of Utah

create warmer and softer effects to contrast with the colder, more precise lines of the silver. Joseph Stella combined wax colored pencil and silverpoint in his many botanical drawings of flowers.

Ivan Albright worked in metalpoint from about 1956 to 1969. He used silver in combination with platinum-, gold-, brass-, and copperpoint. His preferred surface was Video Media paper, a commercially produced clay-coated paper that was popular among metalpoint artists until production of it ended around 1985. Albright created several drawings in the late 1960s in which he combined silver, gold, copper, platinum, and brass, seeking to create disturbing tensions through the differentiation of metallic textures. In *The Last of the Old Woodstock Inn* (pl. 100), one of a series of metalpoint drawings of nineteenth-century houses scheduled for demolition, he employed multiple perspectives, constantly turning his page around in a circular manner and drawing what interested him at the moment. Albright drew the inn almost completely in silverpoint, and it appears stable and shimmering in the midst of tilting planes. Occasionally, he chose to shape one or more of the metal wires of his stylus into a stump. This allowed him to accentuate lights and darks and even to create a dark black resembling graphite.

A growing number of contemporary artists have created abstract and highly conceptual imagery either in silverpoint alone or in combination with other media. Susan Schwalb, Jasper Johns, Carol Prusa, Erika Winstone, Michelle Grabner, Linda Hutchins, Ron Janovich, Marietta Hofferer, Natalie Loveless, and Shirazeh Houshiary have in various ways sought to distill and amplify silverpoint's unique qualities—its coloristic transformation over time, pale luminosity, linear precision, delicacy and subtlety of tone, inherent beauty, elegance, and sensuality.

Schwalb is the most widely known American artist working in metalpoint today, having taken an enormous variety of directions over the course of her career. She has enlarged the boundaries and possibilities of the medium, and she continues to experiment with new techniques, grounds, supports, materials, styli, and tonal as well as coloristic possibilities. Schwalb has been a major force in encouraging artists to work in the medium and has helped many artists get started by supplying tools and commercially prepared paper. Her openness to new possibilities and the range of her influence have led one author to dub her "the Pied Piper of silverpoint."[17] In 1979, she began to create nonobjective images in silverpoint, inspired by her study of tribal art (fig. 6). Then in the mid-1980s, she began to create abstractions rooted in geometry and the natural world, especially calling upon memories of landscapes and places she has visited, rich with atmospheric and lighting effects. In turn, she has pushed the graphic boundaries of the medium and moved metalpoint in the direction of painting through her various experiments, including the incorporation of metal leaf, use of colored grounds, and erasures with sandpaper to expose the paint layers underneath.

Fig. 6. Susan Schwalb, *Kahili V*, 1980, silverpoint, copperpoint, smoke and wax on Video Media paper. Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida, Purchase, R. H. Norton Trust

During the period between 1997 and 2010, Schwalb devoted much of her attention to her *Strata* series (pl. 102), in which she employed an austere vocabulary of horizontal lines and bands placed in an intuitive and uniform manner on a paper or wood support to create a luminous, ethereal glow. The lines and bands hover over the picture plane, appearing to vibrate gently. The artist radically expanded her approach and technique by sometimes setting her stylus aside and applying metal directly onto the prepared surface. To do this, she used small pieces of metal, including silver, copper, brass, steel, lead, aluminum, and bronze, turning them on edge and rubbing or scraping them across the surface. To darken the marks, she drew over some areas.

She juxtaposed the different tones and colors of the metals, seeking to "achieve a shimmering atmosphere reminiscent of the luminous transparency of watercolor."[18] The drawings allude to geologic strata, sound waves, and staves in music notation.

Jasper Johns experimented with silverpoint in 1984, creating three drawings in the medium, including one in which he exploited the full range of metalpoint's graphic capabilities (pl. 103). The artist does not recall what prompted him to experiment with metalpoint, but he surmises that the impulse may have stemmed from the gift of a silverpoint stylus or sheets of commercially prepared paper.[19] Johns is deeply interested in and greatly admires the work of Leonardo, and in the 1980s he also often incorporated details borrowed from Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* (1512–1516, Unterlinden Museum) in his works. He believes "old art offers as good a criticism of new art as new art offers of old."[20] Over the course of his career, Johns has challenged himself to understand the nature and capacity of a wide range of media in his drawings. He feels that there is a purity in the notion of a drawing and the "idea changes to some degree when the medium changes."[21]

Most of Johns's drawings are based on paintings or prints he completed earlier. *Untitled* was inspired by a closely related group of paintings from the early 1980s, including his *Ventriloquist* (1983, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), which features a compositional grouping of plumbing fixtures and the wood-grained wall of a bathroom in his house at Stony Point, New York; a vase commemorating the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II of England in 1977 (which shows her profile and that of Prince Philip in the negative shapes on the sides of the vase); and tracings of the contours and striated lines of a wood engraving of the great whale of *Moby-Dick* by Barry Rosen (these lines overlap and intermingle with those of the wood grain). Johns's lively compositional design consists mostly of overlapping grids and interweaving straight, curved, and hatched lines. There is a broad variety of spacing between lines, the artist having used the point and the stump of the silver wire to create contrasting textures.

In 1985, the exhibition *The Fine Line: Drawing with Silver in America* stimulated and expanded interest in metalpoint in the United States. In the time since then, a growing number of exhibitions in museums and galleries have celebrated contemporary efforts in the medium. Artists today can turn to the Internet to learn the basics of metalpoint drawing as well as to purchase essential materials. Currently, two Facebook groups are devoted to metalpoint.[22] The Canadian Gerrit Verstraete and the Americans Jeannine Cook and Sherry Camhy have helped create greater awareness of the diversity and quality of metalpoint drawing in the United States and Canada as well as globally. These artists continue to assist galleries and museums in planning metalpoint exhibitions.

Contemporary artists choose from a broad array of traditional and modern materials, including handmade and machine-made papers. They experiment with an array of supports, including primed canvas, wood and Masonite panels, and the painted walls of gallery spaces. As in times past, many of today's artists are enraptured by

the extremely fine and precise lines and the quality of iridescence attainable with silverpoint. Contemporary enthusiasm for metalpoint inspired Thea Burns in 2012 to write *The Luminous Trace: Drawing and Writing in Metalpoint*, in which she concludes that the current enthusiasm for the medium is driven by a renewed interest among artists in precise draftsmanship, process, and careful mark making, as well as by the challenge of a discipline that is both exacting and meditative.[23] Many contemporary metalpoint artists have been directly stimulated by their study and respect for Italian Renaissance and Northern Renaissance master drawings.

One of the most innovative artists working in metalpoint today is the Florida-based Carol Prusa, who was inspired to turn to silverpoint during the summer of 2002 when she was teaching a class in Florence on the use of historical methods and materials. She was drawn to the medium after seeing Leonardo's *Study for the Setting of the "Adoration of the Magi"* (circa 1481) (see p. 109, fig. 5) in the collection of the Uffizi Gallery, a work that incorporates silverpoint and ink with white-lead highlights.

Fig. 7. Carol Prusa, *Limina*, 2011, silverpoint, graphite, and paint, with fiber optics. Courtesy of the Artist and Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco and New York

On specifically manufactured three-dimensional acrylic domes (some the size of household bowls and others upward of six feet in diameter), intended to be hung on the wall, Prusa employs silverpoint, graphite, titanium white pigment, metal leaf, and clusters of fiber optics that create pinpoint beams of light (fig. 7). Her most recent domes embed small videos in their centers, which run on iPods. Prusa creates a traditional ground of sanded layers of gesso and covers the surface of each dome with intricate silverpoint drawings washed with ground graphite and heightened with white paint. They are composed of cosmic shapes and plantlike forms and designs rooted in organic forms and processes. Silverpoint lines flow and coil into swirls and eddies.

Prusa is one of a group of contemporary artists who are newly challenging our conceptions about metalpoint and who have developed original, innovative, and often extreme approaches to thinking about and utilizing the medium. The Southern California artist Fran Siegel, for example, creates room-sized installations rendered in such reflective materials as metallic pigment, foil disks, transparent plastics, and silver wire. These works are part of her ongoing *Overland* series, in which she explores the city of Los Angeles from a roving aerial perspective. Each of the works stretches from floor to ceiling and is constructed from thousands of drawn paper particles. Key to her process is the creation of small companion silverpoint studies (fig. 8), which enable her to plan the composition and the structure of its light values.

Fig. 8. Fran Siegel, *Tracks for Overland #4*, 2005, silverpoint on clay-coated paper. Collection of the artist

As Siegel has explained: "My work has always been engaged with activating an in-between empty space (void). I amplify shifts in light and perception. Silverpoint is an ideal medium for me to use as a study (sketching tool) as it isolates/pares down and activates the relationship between marks and the page. I use this unique medium to study the structure/framework of the subject on a small scale. This structure is then expanded in monumental and spatial works. In a digital age this scaling up and down is much more fluid."[24]

The Oregon-based Linda Hutchins has followed in the footsteps of Susan Schwalb by finding alternatives to the point of the stylus. She uses silver spoons and thimbles to create wall drawings as large as 9 by 12 feet, which consist of networks of lines that swirl and undulate across the surface. The Canadian-based artist Natalie Loveless creates context-based performances in which she leaves traces of the event in silverpoint on gallery walls. For her 2009 installation at the Kentler International Drawing Space in Brooklyn, New York, she invited friends to determine how she was to behave with the wall—whether to throw things at it, kiss it, or whatever she wanted to do with it. After performing these actions, she used a silverpoint stylus to draw lines around each gesture as well as to connect them.

The British artist Erika Winstone creates wall installations (fig. 9) that involve working with definitions of performance in relation to process and that explore

questions of where a performance really begins and ends. She works with materials that change over time, and she incorporates silverpoint into the process. Winstone loves "silverpoint's qualities of lightness, fineness of line, shimmer and its changing presence in the way it tarnishes after exposure. This connected closely to the qualities of the film and video I was working with... the very activity of watching films together 'sitting in the dark watching others relating together in the light' seems to correlate with the qualities of silverpoint. The delicacy of the medium allowed me to work intuitively and repeatedly on the paintings mixing and combining my sources together and watch the delicate nuances of form that began to gradually appear through this process."[25]

Fig. 9. Erika Winstone, *Talent Show Meets "The Rink,"* 2012, silverpoint, gouache, gesso, canvas, glass panels, and projection of Erika Winstone's video, *The Rink*. Kingsgate Workshop, London

Another innovative contemporary metalpoint artist working in Britain is the Iranian-born Shirazeh Houshiary, who looks to Islamic traditions—particularly Sufi mysticism—for form and content. In *Shroud* (2000, Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery), she applied silverpoint, graphite, and acrylic paint on canvas in a silvery web or filigree across the surface, rendering the Arabic words and phrases "I Am" and "I Am Not" numerous times and in sizes so miniscule as to be almost indecipherable.

Interestingly, Joseph Stella's drawing of Marcel Duchamp (see fig. 1) inspired the contemporary sculptor, photographer, videographer, film maker, and installation artist Bruce Nauman to experiment with metalpoint. In around 1970 he created a large series of silverpoint drawings, and over the years he has used metalpoint from time to time. In 2013, he created his most concentrated drawings in the medium in the past forty years (pls. 104, 105). His suite of nine metalpoint drawings (eight in silverpoint alone and one in a combination of silverpoint and goldpoint) consists of quick, impressionistic and energetic sketches he created while watching a series of new videos that he made of his hands performing a systematic set of finger movements in response to his own verbal instructions. Nauman has frequently used body

references and fragments—often hands—in his artwork since the 1960s. Nauman notes that "Although less forgiving than most other media, metalpoint with the thicker ground I apply enables me to scrape and hatch into the surface and rework passages—certainly integral to the quality of this [new] set of drawings."[26]

Metalpoint has served modern and contemporary American and European artists as a means of exploring the traditional subjects of portraiture, still life, landscape, and the human figure, as well as for creating new, disturbing, fantastic, and non-objective imagery. Informed by the old masters, it has been used in ways that they could never have contemplated or imagined. Modern and contemporary American and European artists have recognized the medium's special qualities and capabilities. In the hands of draftsmen of skill and vision, metalpoint continues to be a medium of immense possibility, inviting still further investigation. One may also wonder how metalpoint will be used in the next thirty years and beyond, and whether the exhibition *Drawing in Silver and Gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns* and this catalog will help generate an even wider and unexpected course of experimentation by artists from America and abroad who have become newly intrigued by the medium's extraordinary qualities.

Notes

1 This essay is an adaption and expanded version of my earlier publication: *The Fine Line: Drawing with Silver in America* (Norton Gallery of Art, West Palm Beach, FL, 1985), 19–26.

2 Hillary Bell, "Silver-Point: A Neglected Art," *The Monthly Illustrator* 5 (July 1895): 50.

3 "Exhibition of Silver Point Drawings by Ercole Cartotto," *Washington Star*, August 6, 1928 n.p.

4 Charles H. Caffin, "The Art of Thomas Dewing," *Harper's Monthly* 116 (April 1908): 721.

5 In the years immediately leading up to the 1920s, the European Oskar Kokoschka and the Americans, Mahonri Mackintosh Young and Leo Mielziner, experimented with silverpoint.

6 Gertrude Stein, *Geography and Plays* (New York, 1968), 405.

7 Joseph Stella, "Autobiographical Notes," Joseph Stella Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, microfilm roll no. 346, frame 1274.

8 Storrs is quoted in C. J. Bulliet, "Storrs' Silver Point and Lepere's Needle," an otherwise unidentified newspaper clipping located in the John Storrs Papers, Archives of American Art, Washington, DC, microfilm roll no. 1463, frame 879.

9 Leo Dee, "Statement by the Artist," *The Art of Leo Dee* (New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, 1978).

10 Kurt Wehlte, "Silberstift," *Die Künstkammer* 10 (August 1935): 20–22.

11 [Mordechai Omer], "Mordechai Omer in Conversation with Avigdor Arikha," *Avigdor Arikha: Drawings* (Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, 1998), 160.

12 Omer 1998 159.

13 Omer 1998, 164.

14 The art historian Thea Burns has noted that Watrous fueled Wilde and other Midwestern artists' interest in the "technical and expressive capacities of... various materials." Thea Burns, *The Luminous Trace: Drawing and Writing in Metalpoint* (London, 2012), 167.

15 Wilde is quoted in Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, *Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting, 1940–1960* (Rutgers University Art Gallery, New Brunswick, NJ, 1982), 25.

16 Daniel V. Thompson Jr., *The Practice of Tempera Painting* (1936, repr. New York, 1962), 44.

17 Margaret Matthews-Berenson, *Luminous Line: Contemporary Drawings in Silverpoint* (Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA, 2010), 13.

18 Susan Schwalb, "Reinventing Silverpoint: An Ancient Technique for the 21st Century," in *Breaking New Ground in Art History: A Festschrift in Honor of Alicia Craig Faxon*, ed. Margaret A. Hanni (Washington, DC, 2014), 225.

19 The artist related this information in response to the author's questionnaire. The response was sent to the author by Maureen Pskowsky, Jasper John's administrative assistant, in an e-mail of October 9, 2013.

20 Johns is quoted in Vivian Raynor, "Jasper Johns: 'I Have Attempted to Develop My Thinking in Such a Way That the Work I've Done Is Not Me,'" *Artnews* 72 (March 1973): 21.

21 Ruth Fine and Nan Rosenthal, "Interview with Jasper Johns," in *The Drawings of Jasper Johns* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1990), 72.

22 The two following sites on Facebook currently are devoted to contemporary drawing in metalpoint: https://www.facebook.com/groups/metalpoint and https://facebook.com/groups/18451030570038.

23 Burns 2012, 176.

24 Fran Siegel, e-mail message to author, January 19, 2014.

25 Erika Winstone, e-mail message to author, October 20, 2013.

26 Bruce Nauman made this statement in response to the author's questions about the artist's work in metalpoint. Nauman, e-mail message to author (forwarded by Angela Westwater), December 26, 2013.

92. Joseph Stella, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1925, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) and graphite on prepared paper

93. John Storrs, *Woman with Her Hand on Her Chin*, 1931, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on commercially prepared paper

94. Marsden Hartley, *Mont Sainte Victoire*, 1927, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on commercially prepared paper

95. Otto Dix, *Old Woman*, 1932, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) and graphite(?) on prepared paper

96. Otto Dix, *Self-Portrait as a Draftsman*, 1933, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on prepared paper

97. Otto Dix, *Hilly Landscape with Jewish Cemetery at Randegg*, 1934, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) and graphite(?) on prepared paper

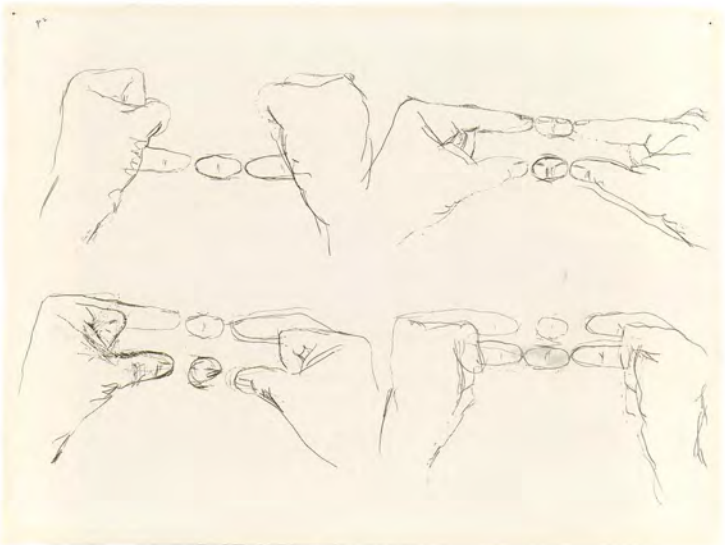
98. Pavel Tchelitchew, *Mother and Child*, 1938, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on commercially prepared paper

99. Avigdor Arikha, *Anne Pregnant*, 1969, silverpoint on prepared paper

100. Ivan Le Lorraine Albright, *The Last of the Old Woodstock Inn*, 1968, silver-, platinum-, gold-, copper-, and brasspoint on Video Media paper

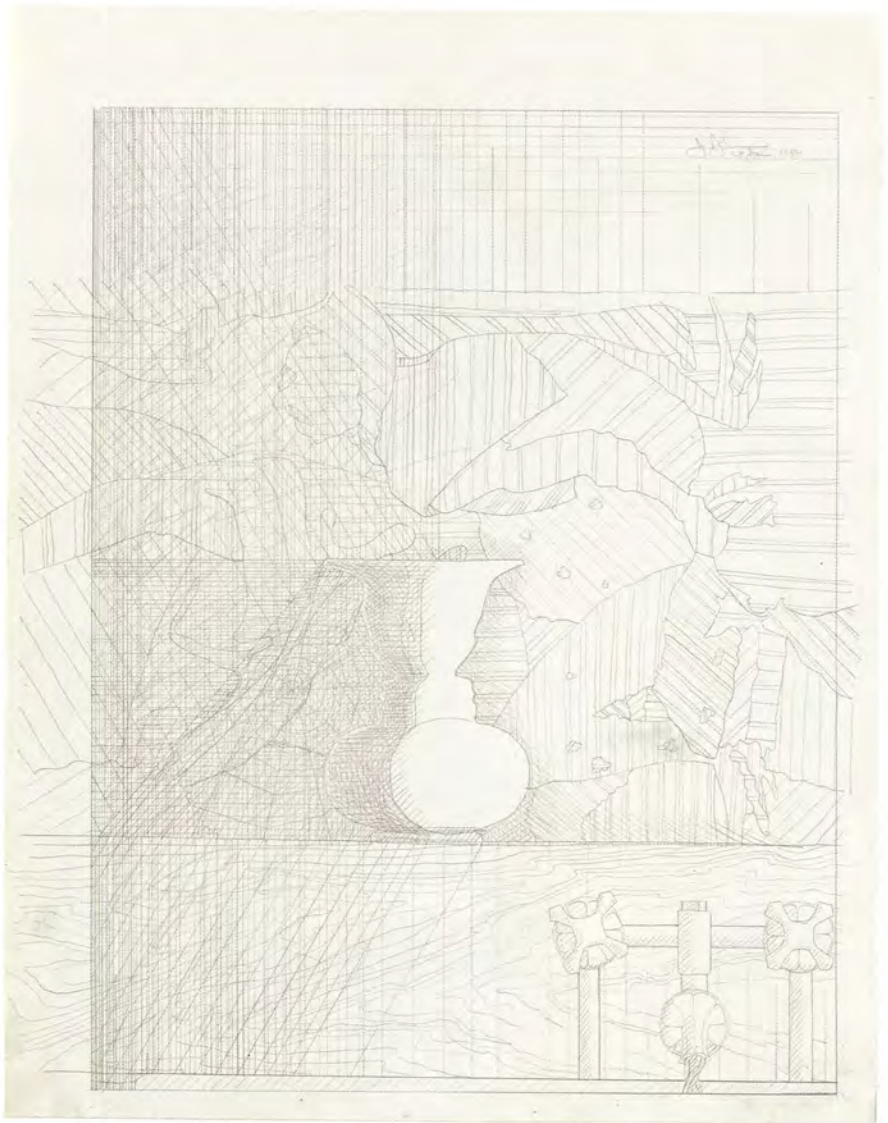
101. Leo Dee, *Paper Landscape*, c. 1972, silverpoint on gesso-coated museum board

91. Thomas Wilmer Dewing, *Head of a Girl*, c. 1895, metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on prepared paper

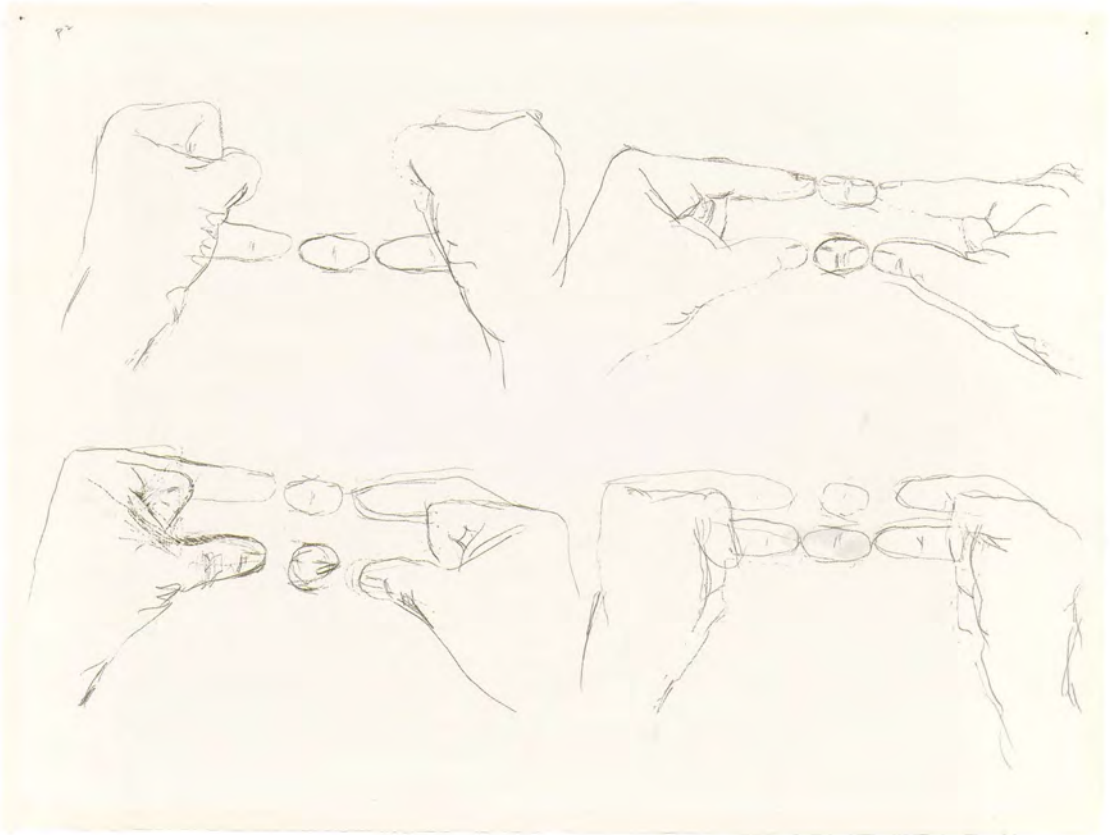


104. Bruce Nauman, *Some Illusions (Number Two)*, 2013, silverpoint on prepared paper

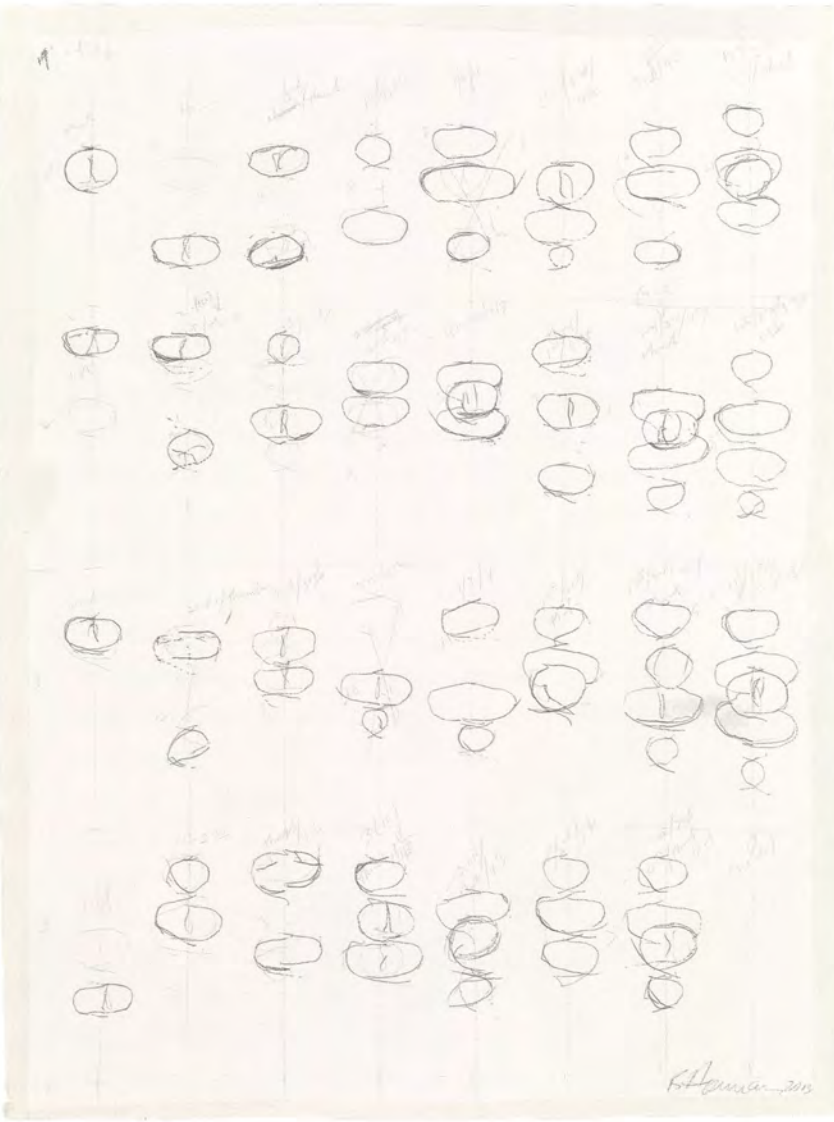
102. Susan Schwalb, *Strata #295*, 1998, silver-, gold-, copper-, aluminum-, brass-, and platinumpoint on Video Media paper



103. Jasper Johns, *Untitled*, 1984, silverpoint on prepared paper



104. Bruce Nauman, *Some Illusions (Number Two)*, 2013,
silverpoint on prepared paper



105. Bruce Nauman, *Some Illusions (Number Nine)*, 2013, silverpoint and goldpoint on prepared paper

Charles P. Sainton
(British, 1861–1914)
A Will-o-the-Wisp, 1897
metalpoint on white commercially prepared board
8 ¼ × 13 ⅜ (20.96 × 33.97)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, E.1238.1948
PL. 86

Charles Haslewood Shannon
(British, 1863–1937)
Eight Studies of a Dead Mouse, 1896
silverpoint on white commercially prepared paper
8 ⅞ × 11 ¼ (22.6 × 28.5)
The British Museum, London, 1949,0411.38
Literature: Delaney 1989, cat. 261.
PL. 87

Joseph Edward Southall
(British, 1861–1944)
Head of a Girl, 1899
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) with scratching on white prepared paper
7 ⅞ × 6 15⁄16 (20 × 17.7)
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Purchased with funds from the Schweppe Art Acquisition Fund, 2001.19.
PL. 88

Muirhead Bone
(Scottish, 1876–1953)
Scaffolding on the Staircase of the British Museum, c. 1906
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on white commercially prepared paper
12 ⅜ × 9 ⅝ (31.5 × 24.4)
The British Museum, London, 1907,0124.2
PL. 89

Christopher Nevinson
(British, 1889–1946)
Self-Portrait, 1911
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on white commercially prepared paper
10 13⁄16 × 10 1⁄16 (27.5 × 25.5)
The British Museum, London, 1994,0618.8
Literature: Ingleby et al. 1999, cat. 1 (as graphite).
Shown in London only
PL. 90

Modern and Contemporary

Thomas Wilmer Dewing
(American, 1851–1938)
Head of a Girl, c. 1895
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on buff prepared paper
16 ¼ × 14 1⁄16 (41.2 × 35.7)
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Gellatly, 1929.6.28
Literature: Weber 1985, cat. 18; Hobbs 1996, 210.
Shown in Washington only
PL. 91

Joseph Stella
(American, 1877–1946)
Self-Portrait, c. 1925
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) and graphite on white prepared paper
30 3⁄16 × 22 3⁄16 (76.7 × 56.4)
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Purchased with the Alice Newton Osborn Fund, the Katharine Levin Farrell Fund, the Margaretta S. Hinchman Fund, the Joseph E. Temple Fund, and with funds contributed by Marion Boulton Stroud and Jay R. Massey, 1988, 1988-21-1
Literature: Weber 1985, cat. 65.
PL. 92

John Storrs
(American, 1885–1956)
Woman with Her Hand on Her Chin, 1931
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on white commercially prepared paper

13 × 8 (33.02 × 20.32)
Arkansas Art Center Foundation Collection: Purchased with Gallery Contributions, 1985.055
Literature: Weber 1985, cat. 69.
Shown in Washington only
PL. 93

Marsden Hartley
(American, 1877–1943)
Mont Sainte Victoire, 1927
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on commercially prepared paper
13 7/8 × 15 (35.2 × 38.1)
Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Frank J. Sensenbrenner Endowment Fund purchase, 1981.4.
Literature: Haskell 1980, 75; Weber 1985, cat. 35.
PL. 94

Joseph Meder
(German, 1857–1934)
Das Büchlein vom Silbersteft, 1909
bound volume printed in letterpress with inserted pages of prepared paper
6 × 5 11/16 (15.2 × 14.4)
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Literature: Burns 2012, 183–194.
FIG. 3, P. 229

Otto Dix
(German, 1891–1969)
Old Woman, 1932
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) and graphite(?) on white prepared paper
22 5/8 × 18 1/2 (57.5 × 47)
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase, 1950, 246.1950
Literature: Lorenz 2003, IV, IE 3.1.1.
PL. 95

Otto Dix
(German, 1891–1969)
Self-Portrait as a Draftsman, 1933
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on white prepared paper
22 15/16 × 18 9/16 (58.3 × 47.2)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett, E III 2142
Literature: Lorenz 2003, IV, IE 1.1.1.
Shown in Washington only
PL. 96

Otto Dix
(German, 1891–1969)
Hilly Landscape with Jewish Cemetery at Randegg, 1934
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) and graphite(?) on prepared paper
12 5/8 × 19 5/8 (32.1 × 49.8)
Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Kupferstichkabinett, Inv. 1968-24
Literature: Lorenz 2003, V, IE 7.4.3.
Shown in London only
PL. 97

Pavel Tchelitchew
(American, 1898–1957)
Mother and Child, 1938
metalpoint (probably silverpoint) on commercially prepared paper
12 1/2 × 16 1/16 (31.8 × 40.8)
Lent by The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Walter C. Baker, 1967, 67.127.4
Literature: Kirstein 1947, cat. 36; Weber 1985, cat. 75.
Shown in Washington only
PL. 98

Avigdor Arikha
(Israeli, 1929–2010)
Anne Pregnant, 1969
silverpoint on white prepared paper
9 5/8 × 13 13/16 (24.5 × 35.1)
The British Museum, London, 2004,0929.9
Literature: Omer 1998, 42; Thomson and Coppel 2006, 5.
Shown in London only
PL. 99

Ivan Le Lorraine Albright
(American, 1897–1983)
The Last of the Old Woodstock Inn, 1968
silver-, platinum-, gold-, copper-, and brasspoint on Video Media paper
20 × 16 (50.8 × 40.6)

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Ivan Albright, 1977.18
Literature: Weber 1985, cat. 1.
Shown in Washington only
PL. 100

Leo Dee
(American, 1931–2004)
Paper Landscape, c. 1972
silverpoint on gesso-coated museum board
35 1/8 × 26 (89.2 × 66)
Yale University Art Gallery, Purchased with Aid of Funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Susan Morse Hilles Matching Fund, 1973.10
Literature: Weber 1985, cat. 15.
Shown in Washington only
PL. 101

Susan Schwalb
(American, born 1944)
Strata #295, 1998
silver-, gold-, copper-, aluminum-, brass-, and platinumpoint on Video Media paper
24 × 24 (60.96 × 60.96)
Eric and Patricia Chafe
Shown in Washington only
PL. 102

Jasper Johns
(American, born 1930)
Untitled, 1984
silverpoint on white prepared paper
17 1/4 × 13 5/8 (43.82 × 34.61)
Collection of the artist
Literature: Fine and Rosenthal 1990, 63.
PL. 103

Bruce Nauman
(American, born 1941)
Some Illusions (Number Two), 2013
silverpoint on white prepared paper
18 × 24 (45.72 × 60.96)
Kravis Collection, K5430b
PL. 104

Bruce Nauman
(American, born 1941)
Some Illusions (Number Nine), 2013
silverpoint and goldpoint on prepared paper
24 × 18 (60.96 × 45.72)
Kravis Collection, K5430i
PL. 105