

# **LINDA KARSHAN** Studio View

“They told me that the truth of the universe  
was inscribed into our very bones. That the  
human skeleton was itself a hieroglyph.”

Saul Bellow, ‘Something to Remember Me By’

**LINDA KARSHAN**

**Studio View** a book in three parts



© The Trustees of the British Museum

*Self-Portrait*, 1994, oil pastel, pencil and Indian ink on paper, 32.2 x 27 cm

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LK drawing in her studio in Dulwich, London, in 2004. “This shows the reaching out; it is graceful. And the balancing, too.”

## FOREWORD

*Linda Karshan*

British psychoanalyst W. R. Bion usefully tells us that knowledge is not something you have, but is the sum of the connections between what you learn and your experience. This three-part book brings together much of what I have learned in the studio, always testing that experience against my findings as a ‘common reader’.

A common reader is someone who roams the fields of learning feeding freely on the thoughts they find there, testing these thoughts against each other and against ones own experience.

In Part One, Turning Pattern into Being, Matthias Bärmann casts his learned eye on my experience as a printmaker, focusing his attention on a series of seven dry point etchings called *Glint I–VII* from 2016. I chime in with selections from a transcript of an interview I gave on the making of *Glint* at the Reform Club, January 2017.

Part One closes with the drawings, where it all began. Installation shots were taken in the studio when the Redfern drawings were pinned on the wall. This is where the judgement takes place.

Part Two brings together my seasonal jottings from 2004 to 2017. These brief writings – trials, perhaps – track my movements in the studio and my thinking, too, as I seek to understand what it could mean. Like the drawings themselves, the jottings became increasingly spare. But, in the words of philosopher David Wiggins, complexity came rushing back in the form of Helen’s photo jottings. The jottings were further embellished by photos and film stills by Ishmael Annobil and Harald Schluttig.

Part Three is the province of Elizabeth Tomos. Izzy’s thesis is that embodiment in the making of art can be a form of knowledge production.

“These marks and moves have learned a lot”, I wrote in August 2006. Her essay, ‘Inscribed Matter to Matter’, followed by extracts from the studio interview in 2015, bear witness to the truth of her idea.

“Extraordinary how mathematics can help you to know yourself”  
Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

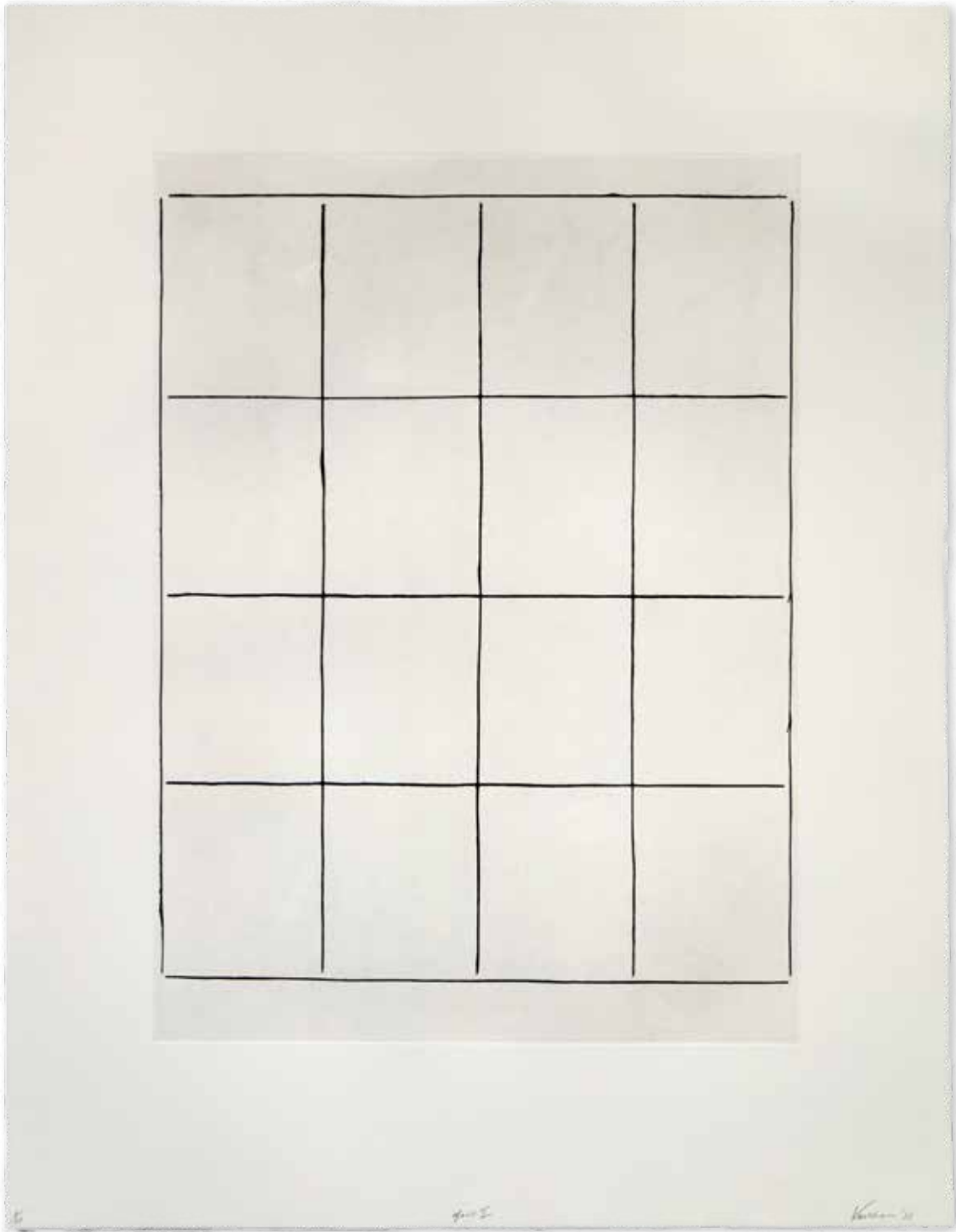
*Part One*

# **TURNING PATTERN INTO BEING**

*Glint I–VII*

All works are drypoint etchings and are 76.2 x 58.4 cm. They were printed by Gregory Burnet at Burnet Editions, New York City, April 2016

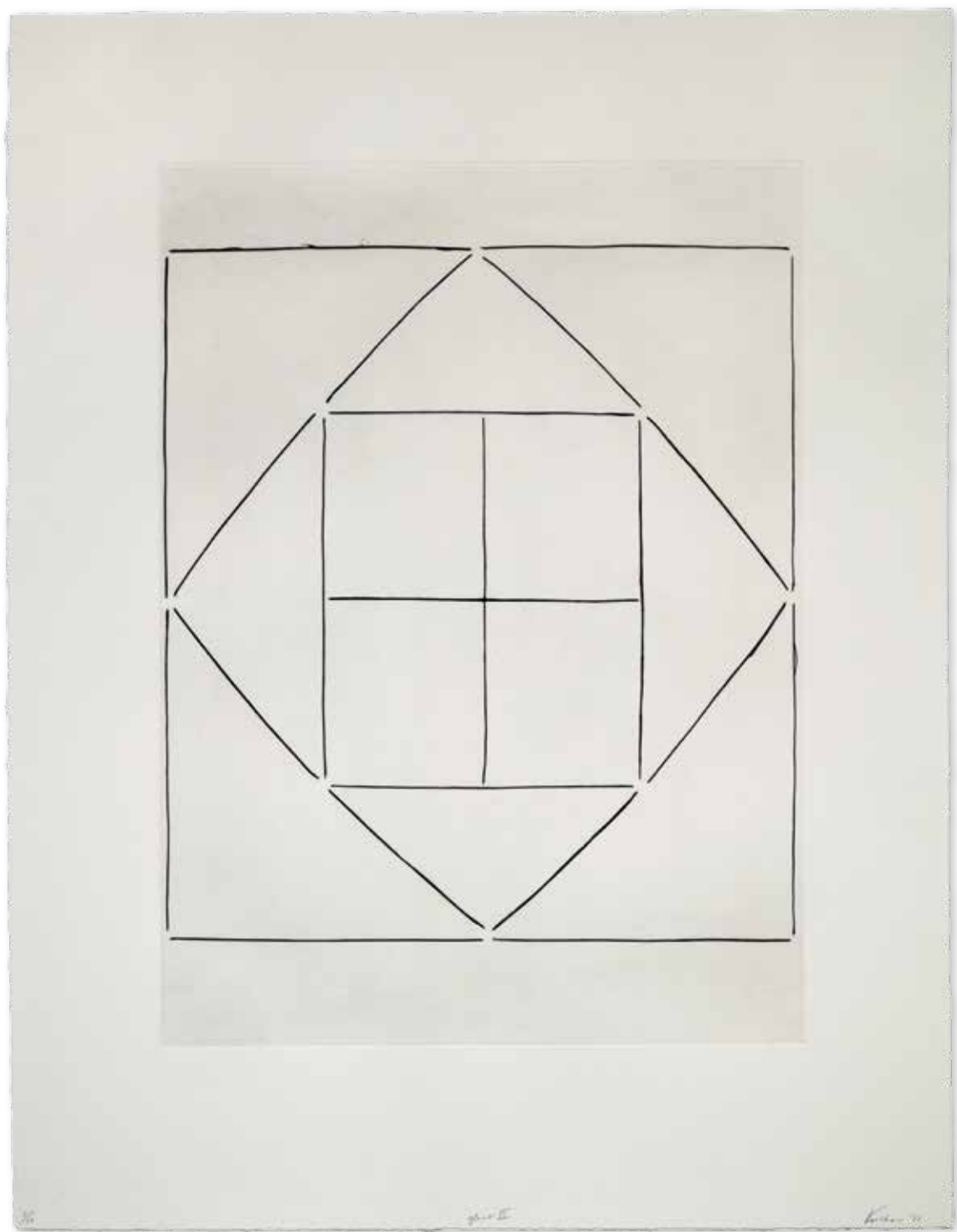
Very few lines describe these large, spare, graceful figures. They give the impression of the archaic. When carving the lines into the grounded plate, my body demanded that each line be carved once, twice, thrice and a fourth stroke. Each line is both etching and drypoint.



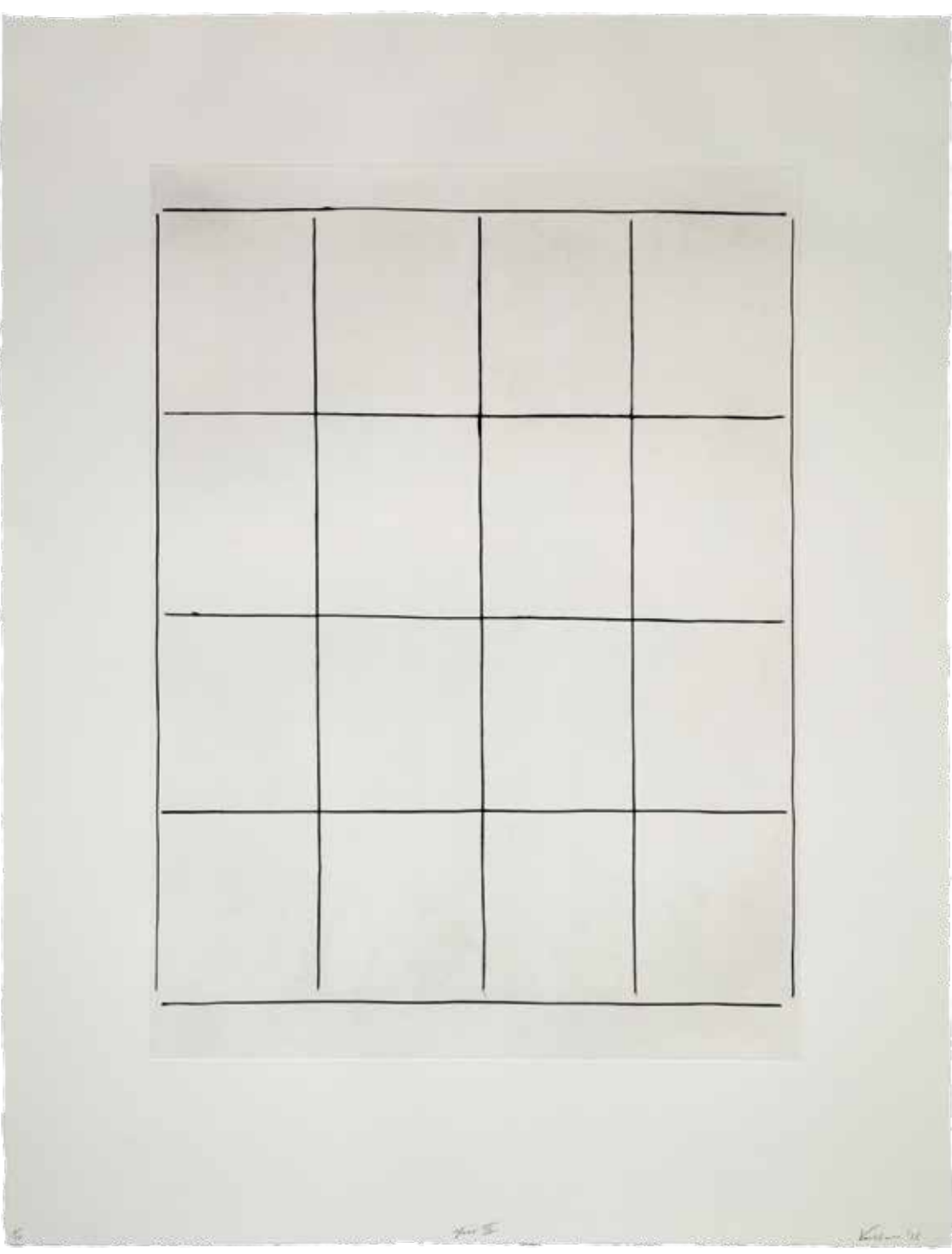
*Glint I*, 2016

Jean Yong Photography Inc, NYC

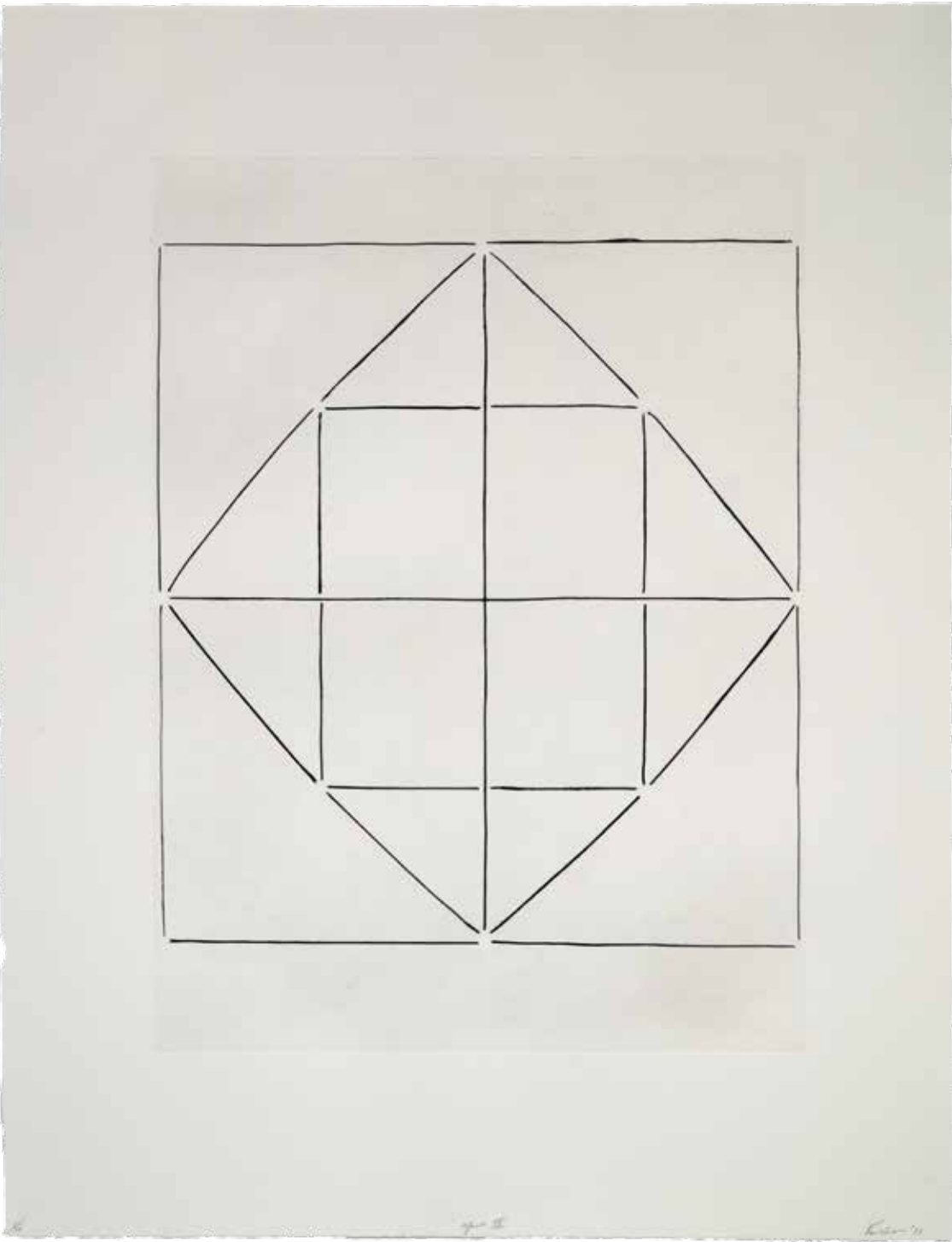




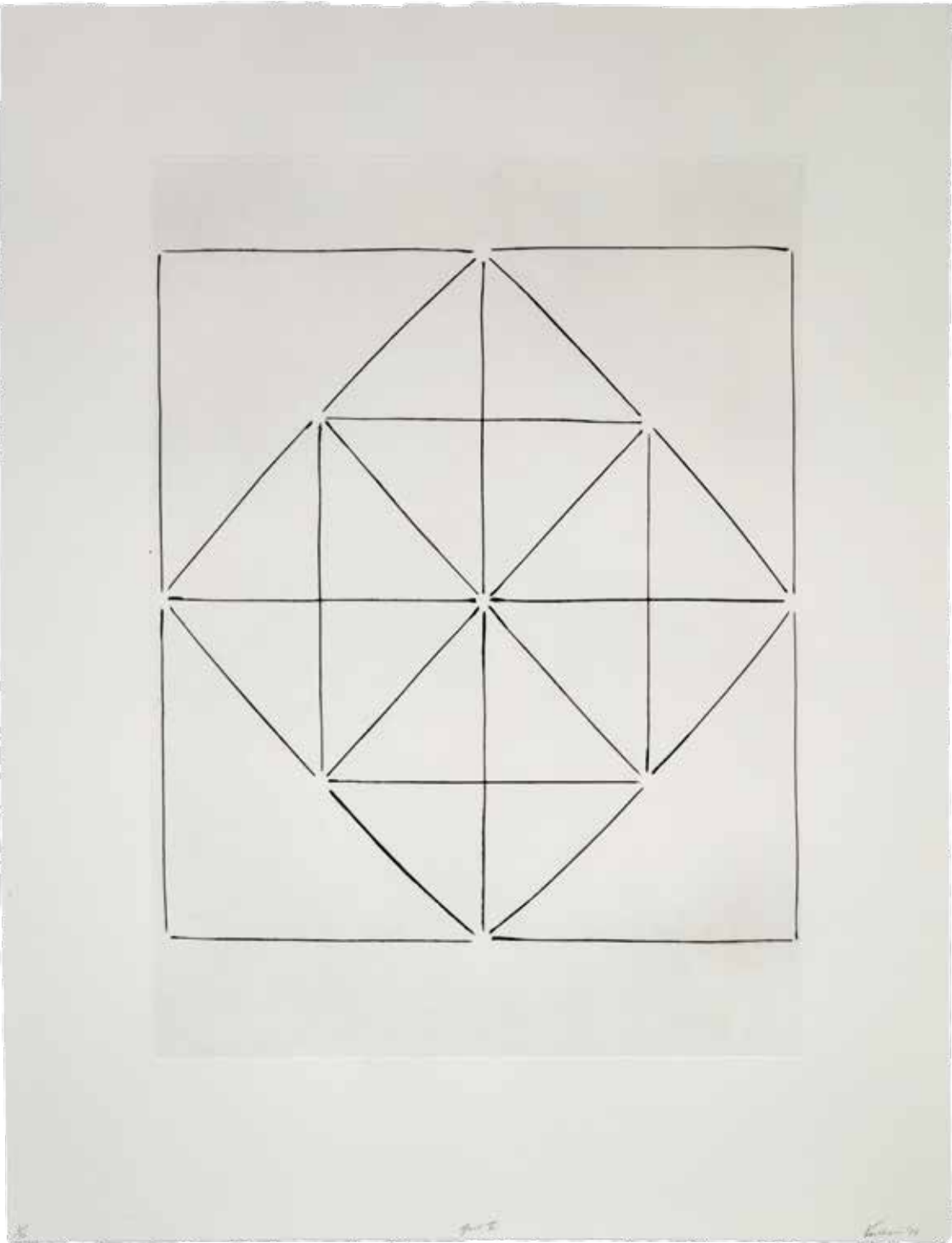
*Glint II, 2016*



*Glint III, 2016*

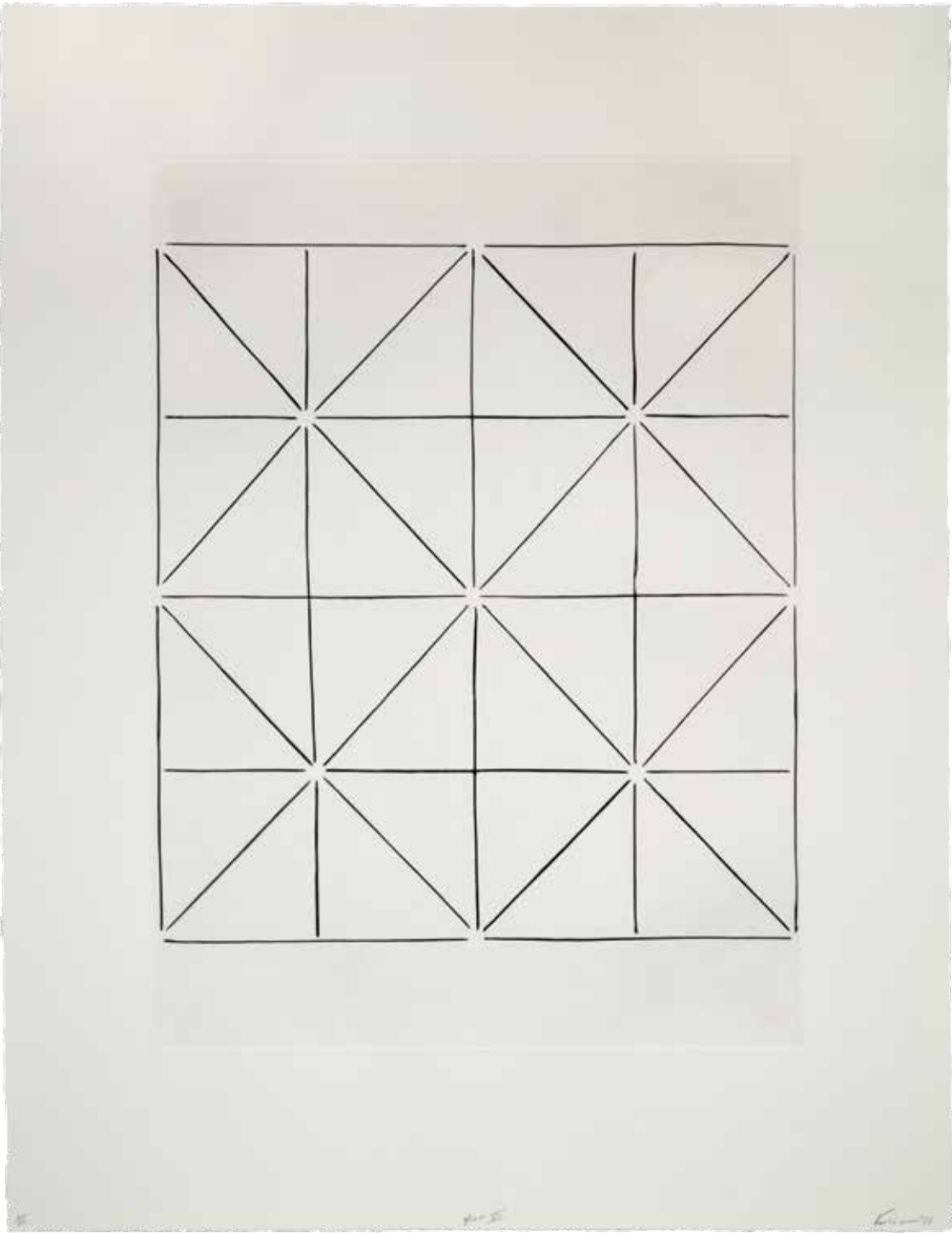


Glint IV, 2016

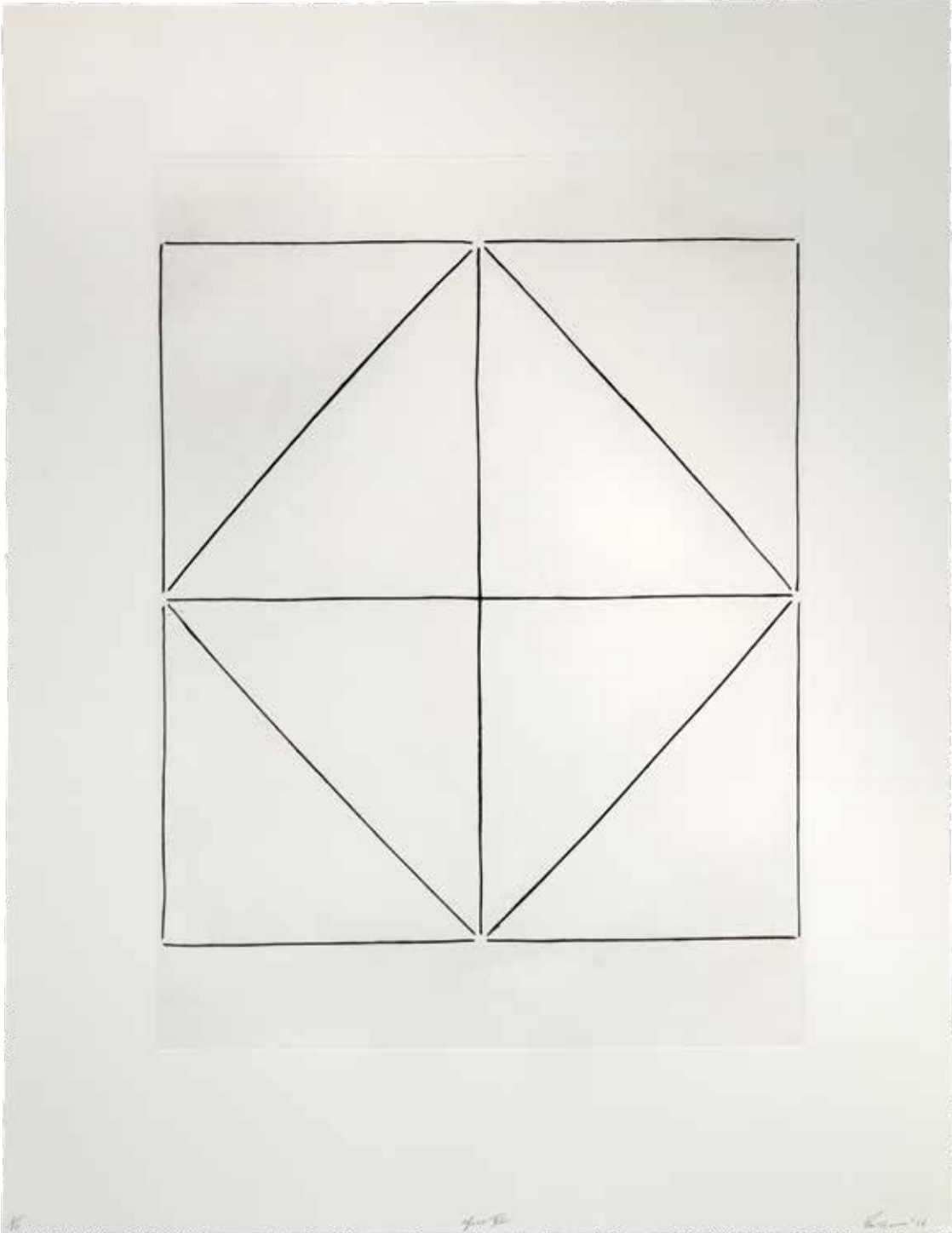


Glint V, 2016





Glint VI, 2016



Glint VII, 2016

# Linda Karshan: Turning Pattern into Being

Matthias Bärmann

In his novel *The Body Artist*, Don DeLillo lets its main character, the performance artist Lauren Hartke, say some interesting sentences:

“I’ve always felt smart in my body. I taught it to do things other bodies could not. It absorbs me in a disinterested way.”

“Maybe the idea is to think of time differently... Stop time, or stretch it out, or open it up. Make a still life that’s living... we become stripped down, less self-assured. I don’t know... What’s left? Who’s left?”

“It is about who we are when we are not rehearsing who we are.”<sup>1</sup>

The identity of body and consciousness in the movement. Changes in the perception of time. A form of self-renunciation in the artistic process, which, well, what actually? – reduces the acting person to its inner essential core? Does that even exist? It is a little bit like the paradoxical question, which is raised by the Koan from the Rinzai school of Zen: “Who were you, before your parents were born?” A question, which pulls the rug out from under your feet.

“What’s left? Who’s left?” Maybe these questions are raised too much from the outside. From the subject’s perspective, which faces the world of the objects. The questions disappear, as soon as the consciousness merges into more comprehensive processes – who asks then, anymore? Friedrich Nietzsche describes the process of inspiration in this context as follows:

“One listens, one does not search; one accepts, one does not ask, who is giving; like lightning a thought flashes up, with necessity, without hesitation with regard to its form – I never had a choice.”

“An instinct for rhythmic proportions, which spans extensive realms of form – the extension, the need for an all encompassing rhythm is almost a criterion for the power of inspiration, a kind of compensating counter-force against its pressure and tension.”<sup>2</sup>

It is an experience, which, according to Nietzsche, penetrates the body “down to the tips of the toes” and is imperative, which occurs like a flash, with elementary force. There is no choice. And it is not coincidental that precisely this passage from Nietzsche’s thinking is quoted by Lama Anagarika Govinda in his book *Grundlagen tibetischer Mystik* in order to shed light on the experience of Tibetan states of immersion. The disintegration of the self, its sublation in the dynamic of

<sup>1</sup> Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist* (New York: Scribner, 2001), pp. 105, 107 and 110.

<sup>2</sup> Lama Anagarika Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (Boston: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1969), pp. 162–63.

an occurrence; the overwhelming tension which can only be controlled by rhythm, by rhythmic structures and relations; the sublation of the separation between body and mind: this similarly has always been the essential feature of the artistic creative process.

\* \* \*

Linda Karshan starts as a ‘walking artist’. The inner rhythm of counting already begins on her way to her studio. She steps towards her working table, and the walking turns into a dance, a choreography, a sequence of slow rhythmic movements. The body’s posture, the balance, always fragile and always held: extension of the upper body forward, the slow stretching out of the arm with the hand, which freely draws the line, the balancing stretching of the leg as a countermovement, like in slow motion, body-measured. After each drawn line, the sheet is turned through 90° anticlockwise – the paper’s sound on the wooden table – accompanied by small steps and sidesteps of the feet, which mark the inner rhythm of counting. Then the next line, stretching with balancing countermovement – turning, steps, next line. The inner counting is always there, like a pulse, congruent with heartbeat and breath. Meditation in motion. Movements, drawing the line.<sup>3</sup>

It is a process of great discipline and complexity. Control of the body, of the breath, mental concentration and presence, linked by rhythmic patterns. Utmost discipline merges into entire detachedness and self-forgetfulness. The world descends – and emerges again on the paper’s surface in form of geometrical patterns. Turning pattern into being. Rhythmic impulses and marks intertwine to figures, which emerge like sequences from an open and unpredictable process. They are archetypal patterns, formally reduced right up to anonymity, but realized in the freely drawn line, vibrantly individual and, thus, human. System and spontaneity, the self and the universal, inextricably folded into each other. “Embodied action” (Francisco Varela).

The white of the paper and the geometrical patterns are not in relation ground and figure to each other. They are complementary energies, which pervade and strengthen each other, their interaction creates the sculptural quality of these works. Void plays a crucial role – not because nothing is there, but rather in such a way that nothing is there on its own and that everything interacts with each other alternately. Transitional spaces.

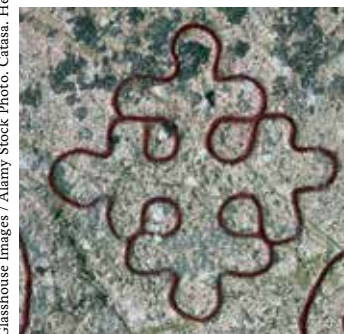
\* \* \*

A number of aspects convey references to like-minded artists in a very free way. Mark Tobey and his fine and nuanced line, whose dense networks are spacious and luminous (in contrast to Jackson Pollock – John Cage has pointed to that). Agnes Martin’s geometrics, which are animated by subtle variations and intended, at least approved coincidences. Roman Opalka, the written/painted numerical series of his paintings, which, together with the audio documents of the counting during the painting process and the photographed self-portraits, that had been taken at the end of each working day, form a whole. “Walking artists” such as Richard Long or

<sup>3</sup> Impressively documented by Ishmael Annobil and Nikos Nikolaos in the video *Linda Karshan: Choreographic Aspect* (STONDEDOGproductions, 2015), available on YouTube.



Glasshouse Images / Alamy Stock Photo. Catasa. Helen Higgins



Top Lascaux, horse with comb-shaped geometrical figure (detail); above left the Eastern Cross on one of the two Risbyle Runestones in Sweden (detail); above right Iron meteorite, discovered 1779 at Toluca Valley, Xiquipilco, Mexico, polished and etched with weak acid to display Windmanstatten patterns; given to LK by Matthias Bärmann on the occasion of her 60th birthday

Hamish Fulton and their body orientation and processual nature of working, the plasticity of time. The nameless artist from the depth of time, who drew a comb-shaped geometrical figure above a magically vivid horse in the caves of Lascaux. Or that anonymous master who carved a fractal cross into a Swedish rune stone.

It is really astonishing, what comes into existence from the absent-minded and, at the same time, extremely present, rhythmic play of body, mind and line. After having sent her a picture of this cross via e-mail, Linda Karshan answered spontaneously:

The fractal cross-form is/feels/more than familiar.  
I KNOW it; I can feel in my body how it was drawn out.  
Of course.<sup>4</sup>

And, in a second approach:

Looking again at this fractal form...  
I can feel the maker of this cross... making it. Of course; this is how  
we move.”<sup>5</sup>

It is not just that she knows this shape and is familiar with it: she senses physically how it feels to draw this line. She finds herself in this other human being, who engraved the stone well above one thousand years ago. “This is how we move.” Of course.

This is a transpersonal experience and perception, which creates identity beyond the limits of personality, as well as beyond the abyss of time. Identity by memory, which is not located at a specific place in the body, such as the brain, but is embedded in every single body cell. Maybe the term “memory” is not strong enough, and one rather has to talk about simultaneity, which transcends individuals and time. In Linda Karshan’s art, in her artistic process, it seems to be self-evident, what is an unreasonable demand for the mind. Don DeLillo: “Maybe there are times when we slide into another reality but can’t remember it, can’t concede the truth of it because this would be too devastating to absorb.”<sup>6</sup>

The work is performed from a spot, beyond the distinction between subject and object, the inside and the outside. The patterns appear in a form of necessity – Linda Karshan: “I have no choice” – such as the three-dimensional grid patterns, which become visible by cutting an iron meteorite, polishing its cut surface and then etching it with weak acid – patterns, which have originated over hundreds of millions of years by cooling in the cosmic space.

Who is drawing?

\* \* \*

When I showed a picture of Linda Karshan’s studio in London to a friend, who is an artist himself, he commented as follows:

Sparse, almost cool. The corner of the table with the glasses which were laid aside... as if someone had cast off his eyes. The drawings: in these exercitations, someone does something for all of us, moves towards the sky, towards the earth.”<sup>7</sup>

4 Linda Karshan, in an e-mail to the author, 20 April 2017.

5 Linda Karshan, in an e-mail to the author, 24 April 2017.

6 Don DeLillo, *The Body Artist*, p. 114.

7 “Spartanisch, fast kühl. Die Tischecke mit der weggelegten Brille... als ob jemand seine Augen abgelegt hat. Die Zeichnungen: In diesen Exerzitien tut jemand etwas für uns alle, bewegt sich zum Himmel hin, zur Erde.” Professor Joerg Fricke in an e-mail to the author, 12 May 2017.

The term “exercitations” absolutely describes Linda Karshan’s work. “Cast off eyes”: in her work, it is much more about a physical perception, which encompasses all senses, than about the seeing. “Towards the sky, towards the earth”: above and below, the body as an intermediary vertical axis in between. And, just like in very early times, when there was a clear awareness in all cultures, that the hermits’ life of withdrawal indeed was of importance for the general public, the impression: here “someone does something for all of us” as well. A doing, similar to the composition of polyphonic music, such as a fugue of Johann Sebastian Bach: interaction of progression in time, horizontal, and vertical impact.

\* \* \*

For a long time, I only knew Linda Karshan as a drawer, graphite on paper. Then, as from 2005, graphic works have been added: etchings, dry-points, woodcuts, lithographs, created in ateliers in Copenhagen, New York, Dresden. Basically, the complex working process of the drawings on paper is maintained. It is, however, modified by the other kind of material, which is worked with: the litho stone with its layers and traces, which were formed over millions of years; the fibrous structure of the wood; the copper plate – when its sealing is broken up by engraving the line: the metal’s glint. Other tools are used: blades, gravers, diamond, acid for the etching. This requires a different pressure, a different pace when drawing the line. And the collaboration with master printers, whose lifelong practice of this form of alchemy is of utmost importance for the working process, comes in addition.

The series ‘Glint’ represents a preliminary highlight of these works, a sequence of seven large-scale works, realised as etching plus dry point. It was made in April 2016 at Burnet Editions in New York, in collaboration with the master printer Gregory Burnet. Linda Karshan describes *Glint* as follows:

Very few lines describe these large, spare, graceful figures. They give the impression of the archaic. When carving the lines into the grounded plate, my body demanded that each line be carved once, twice, thrice and a fourth stroke. Each line is both etching and drypoint.<sup>8</sup>

This technique is extraordinary. Each line is drawn four times, in order to achieve exactly the required level of intensity: twice etched with acid as etching, and two more times directly cut into the copper plate with the diamond tool right through the lacquer sealing. In doing so, the metal’s glint became immediately visible, a phenomenon, which gave the title to the series. This suddenly sparkling glint was some kind of guideline in the working process.

Linda Karshan adds:

The first two lines were etched: there was a hard ground on the plate. I intended to make etchings. BUT MY BODY INSISTED THAT I CARVE THESE LINES TWICE MORE: Once, twice, thrice and fourth stroke.

8 Linda Karshan, in an unpublished interview by Ishmael Annobil, 1 March 2017 (transcription by Nana Yaa Annobil).

It was the glint of the copper, visible after the ground had been cut through, that held me in ‘pace and in place’.

I had no choice; my mind/body/heart and soul compelled me to carve the lines four times.”<sup>9</sup>

The simple drawing of a good line with the free hand is astonishing enough. Here, each line is drawn four times, with two different techniques. This requires unimaginable concentration, stability and balance. The benefit is: after the printing, the lines are on the paper with a penetrating conciseness and plasticity. Minimal irregularities, explicitly desired or at least very consciously taken into consideration, set the lines free and make them vibrant, full of energy. “We rather love them”, says Linda Karshan with respect to those slippages of the line, “we welcome them, but we don’t go for them... It’s precisely those slippages that gives the work its humanity.”<sup>10</sup>

Lines, which cross in different modes and manifest themselves in configurations of varying complexity in ‘Glint’ – in their succession, the seven large-scale etchings read like an abstract-narrative epic, a sequence of condensation and transition. Sometimes, the lines stop just before the intersection and leave the intersection point blank, a tiny free space, in which the white of the paper sparkles luminously – the open light spot in the centre of ‘Glint V’ is a phenomenon in a special way: a radiant white hole. All of this gives the works a starlike character. Thus, archetypes such as rhombus, diamond and, above all, the predominant Greek Cross unfold subsequently.

Is it coincidence, that the lines of the Greek Cross are drawn in such a way that they are curved almost imperceptibly to the outside and provide the form with a tension, as if inwardly being under pressure, which pushes outwardly? With respect to an ancient Greek temple, this corresponds to the curvature, which is not perceptible for the naked eye, and which stretches the entire architecture to the outside, from the major lines of the ground plan to the sequence and the design of the pillars. Linda Karshan herself points out to the Greek reference of the ‘Glint’ series:

Glint is very central. Taken together, they read to me as a Greek frieze. I insist that they’re figures - they are figures, and what was very striking to see them lined up on the wall, was that what held them together – what gave them an absolute sense of frieze-like coherence, was the Greek Cross, and where it fell on the sheet.<sup>11</sup>

Fallen like a meteorite.

\* \* \*

The one, who enters the space, the body, the one who enters the place, which now is the consciousness, is no longer the one who enters, it is now the space, the body, the consciousness itself. Now, at this place.

*Translation: Johannes Bärmann*

<sup>9</sup> ibid.  
<sup>10</sup> ibid.  
<sup>11</sup> ibid.

## Interview with the artist

*Extracts from an interview with Linda Karshan by Ishmael Annobil  
at the Reform Club, London, 1 March 2017*

*How did Glint come about?*

I was able to do a drawing on paper, exactly the size of the plate. We determined the plate size on site. It’s a question not of inches or centimetres; it’s a question of intuitive reach, and that’s how we, before long, didn’t take long at all, to get the size of this rather large plate – and it’s a large plate for a print.

So, okay, I did a drawing, and I was happy with the first drawing, and I drew just as I would do in the studio. I was able then, with white transfer paper, to re-perform the drawing – the transfer paper between the grounded plate and my drawing, so I could see where I was going. And that was a great help, because it’s difficult enough to get a very good line; too much to ask, to also be sure that it’s also going to be a beautiful drawing, perfectly or well-aligned on the plate.

The first thing was of course, having transferred the drawing— this was a great thing. And, secondly, he realised that the plate might move under my weight, and so he suggested taping the corners of this plate, while I did each line. And I said okay.

Now, that gave me great freedom to bring everything to bear—all my concentration, heart, body, mind and soul on this line, once, twice, thrice, and a fourth stroke. And I did.

The notion of convergence is key here. You have to literally stay in this beautiful groove. And I noticed that after the second stroke, the glint of the copperplate, shown through. I had now carved through the ground, and there was the glint. And if I could concentrate on the glint, that is what held me in pace, and in place—thus the title of the series.

This carved line of the Glint, is a real incision. That line is closer to the way I draw – my drawn line is very incised, and it also takes on the need of convergence. In the drawing it’s down, up, down, up; and here it’s just one, two, three, four, but slow, or you’ll slip.

Of course there were certain slippages, not too much. I mean your heart skips a beat of course when it happens, and I will know right away if it’s an okay slippage, or if it’s not. And in truth, I have learned that it’s precisely those slippages that give the work its humanity.

And what I would say then, in the print shop as we put up these seven large sheets of paper, they didn’t look like prints. I said, “Greg, these aren’t prints, they’re ‘things’”.

And I love to use that word, ‘thing’, as a great friend of mine, David Wiggins, a philosopher, who is very thoughtful about his use of words. Sometimes that’s the only word that will do: It’s a ‘thing’.

So there are the seven ‘things’ held together by the Greek cross. My job is the drawing, but then his job is absolutely the right amount of



ink. In that black he probably adds just a little bit of red to make it a warmer black. That’s also a key judgement for the master printer, and then how much to wipe that plate clean. It’s very interesting to watch the master printer wipe that away, and it’s also a very performative thing. The different materials they use - I wouldn’t want to do that part of it at all. For me, it is the technical side, and I leave that to the master printer.

*Your calling the seven panels of Glint ‘Things’ gives a strong sense of significance. How central is Glint is to your practice.*

Glint is very central. Taken together, they read to me as a Greek frieze. I insist that they’re figures – they are figures, and what was very striking to see them lined up on the wall, was that what held them together – what gave them an absolute sense of frieze-like coherence, was the Greek Cross, and where it fell on the sheet.<sup>1</sup>

*You talked about ‘recognising’ Glint after you’ve created it as something that has come from a pre-existing state. That suggests a state of immanence. Were you surprised by this?*

Thrilled, yes. As I say, the forms, of course, are my forms, and while I recognise the form, what’s startling, is the quality of that line. And that can only happen in that kind of a print.

*These seven pieces look like a procession. What is this series telling you about your work, your history, about the future of your work?*

I just think it proves, shows, confirms, if you will, that intuitively, I will bring into being, a natural progression. There’s no question as to what should come next. I just know, for me, what should come next, and I don’t doubt it when I see it.

*Transcribed by Nana Yaa Annobil  
London, March 2017*

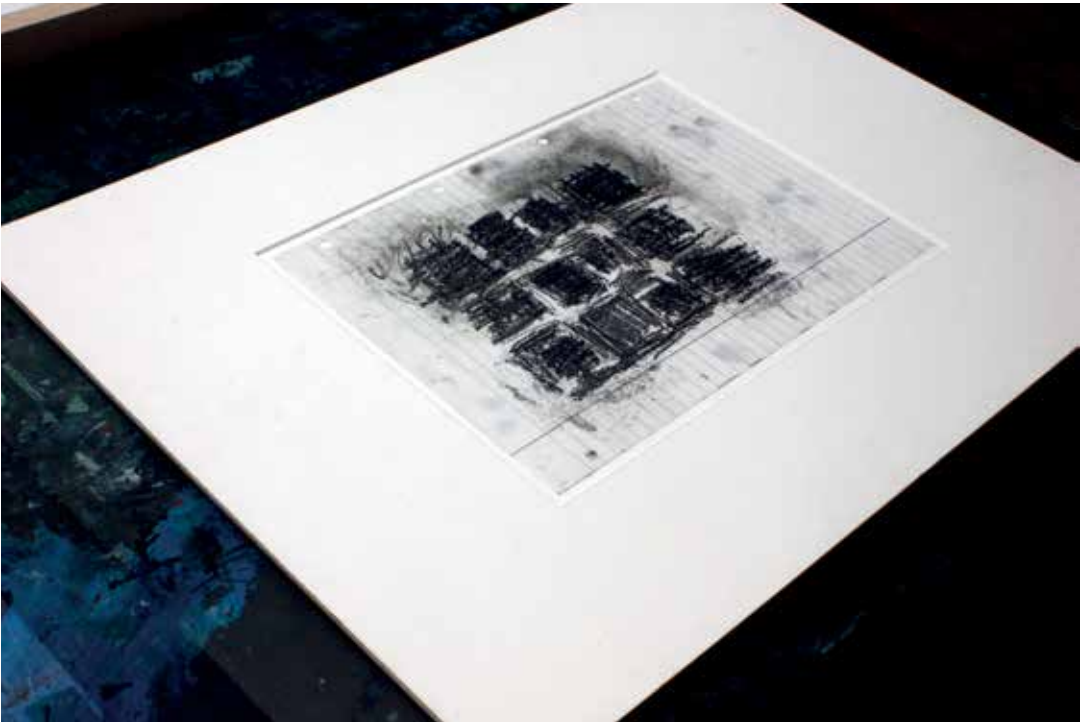
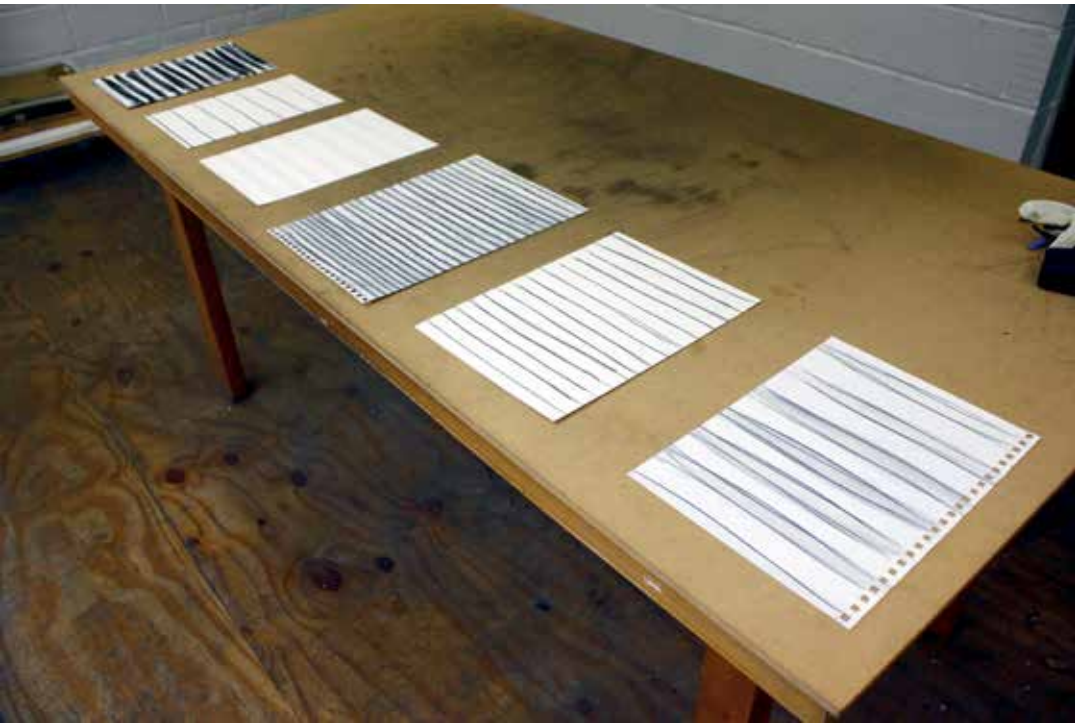
<sup>1</sup> Matthias Bärmann has described the significance of the Greek cross in correspondence with LK in 2017: “It is the balanced evocation of the relation of heaven and earth, male and female, human beings and god, proceeding and momentary time. In architecture, it is centrally oriented, the opposite of the nave basilica. It connects the four cardinal points and stands for the four seasons. Circumscribed, the result is a circle. It is the oldest and simplest form of the cross, the cross of early Christianity, oriental Christianity, the cross of the Templars. The quader-cross. There is no name in its form, no alignment, no teleology; no progress: it is simply there, simply what it is.”

# Studio Views

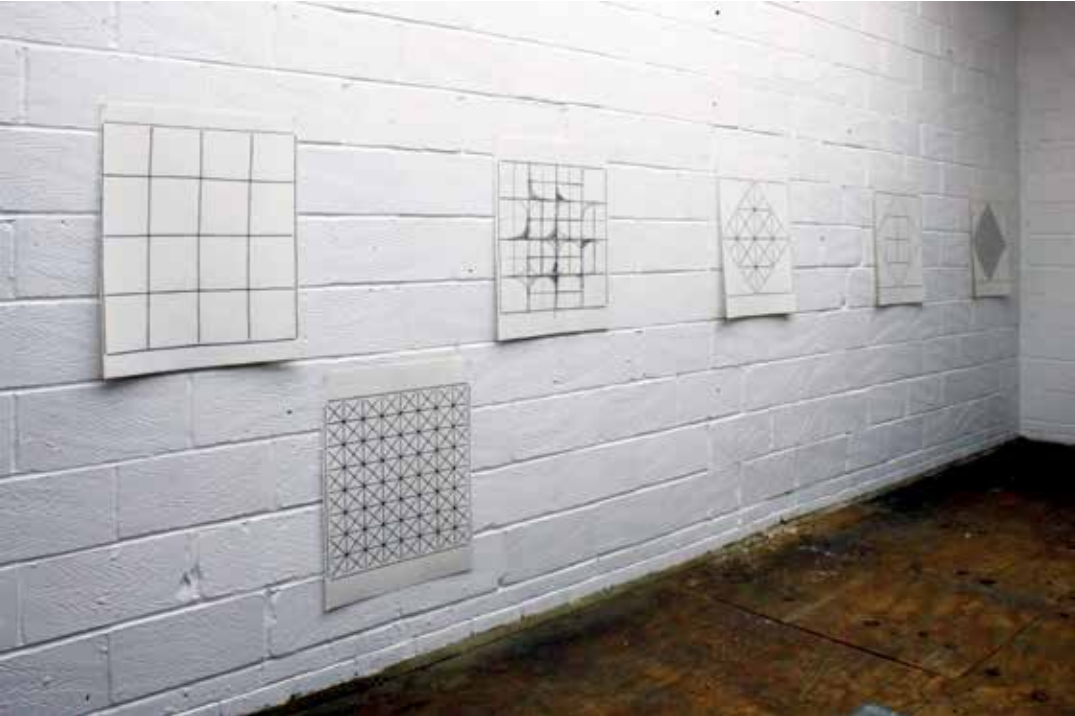
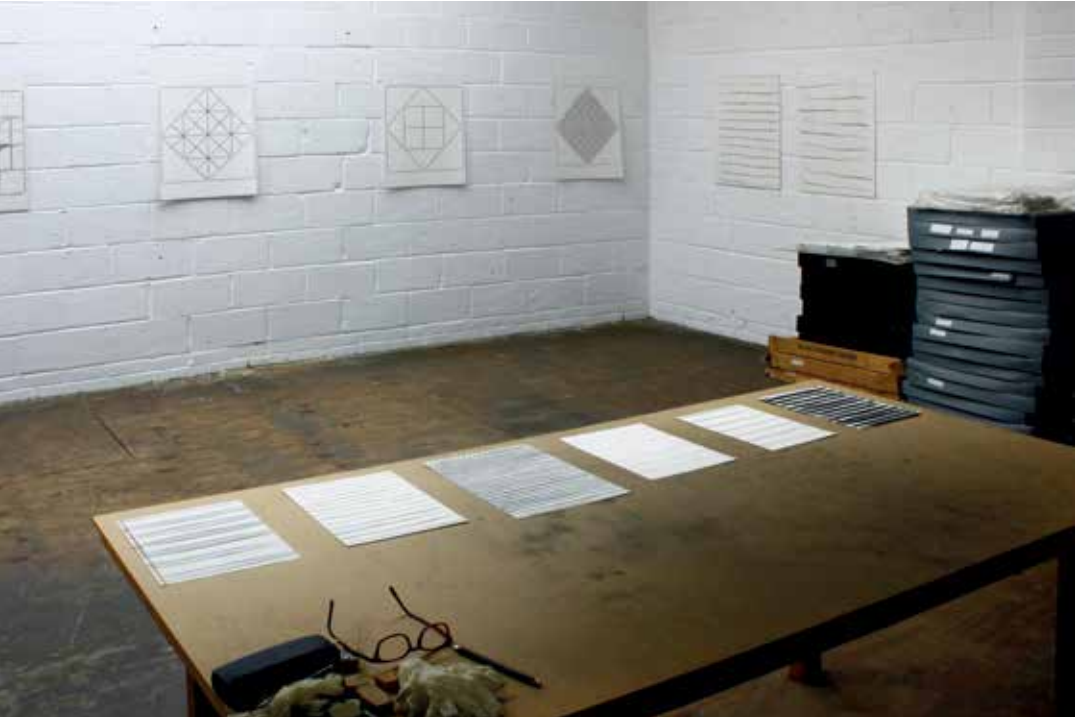
At the artist’s studio, Dulwich, London, in November 2016, preparing for the 2017 Redfern Gallery exhibition

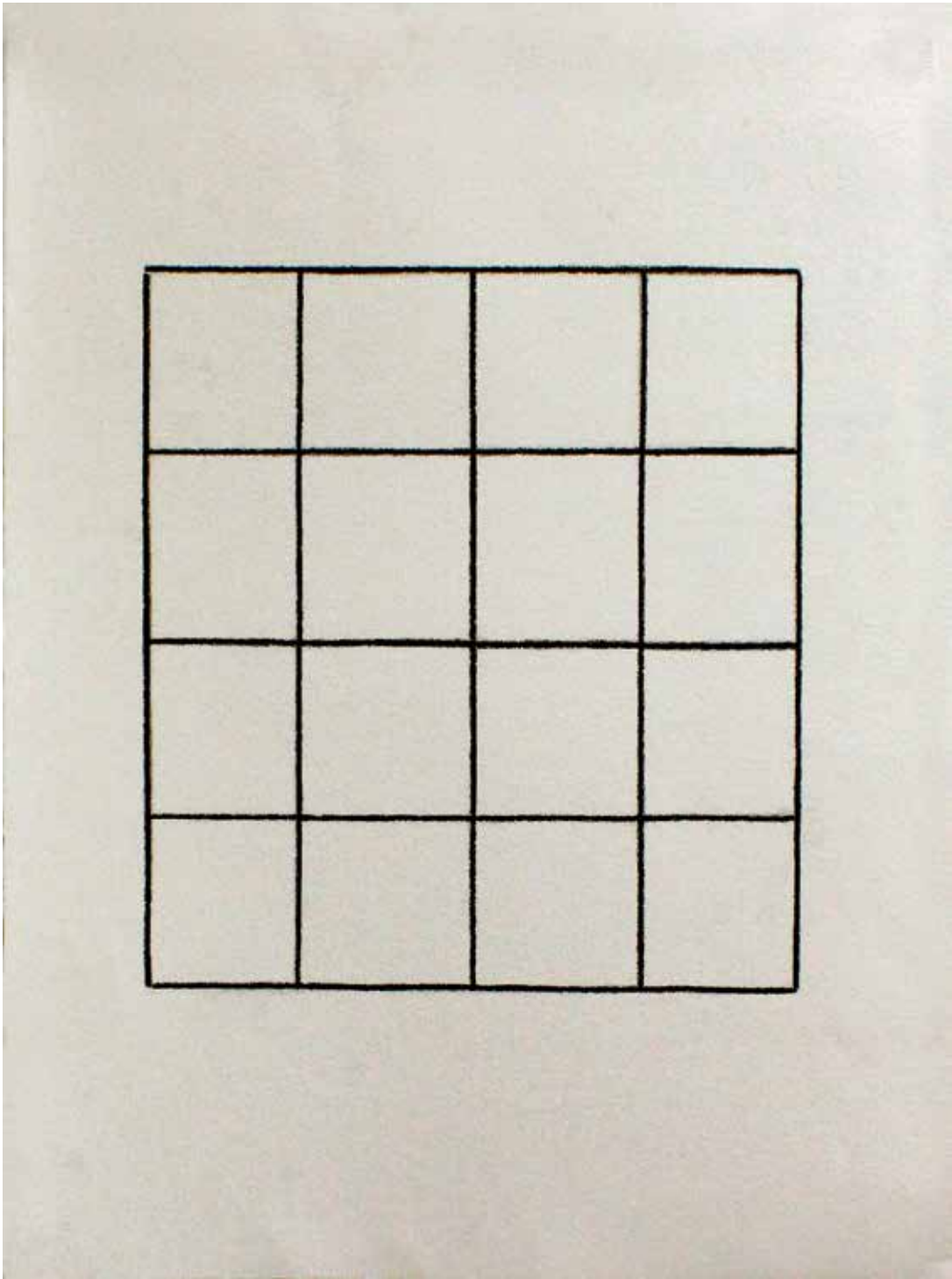




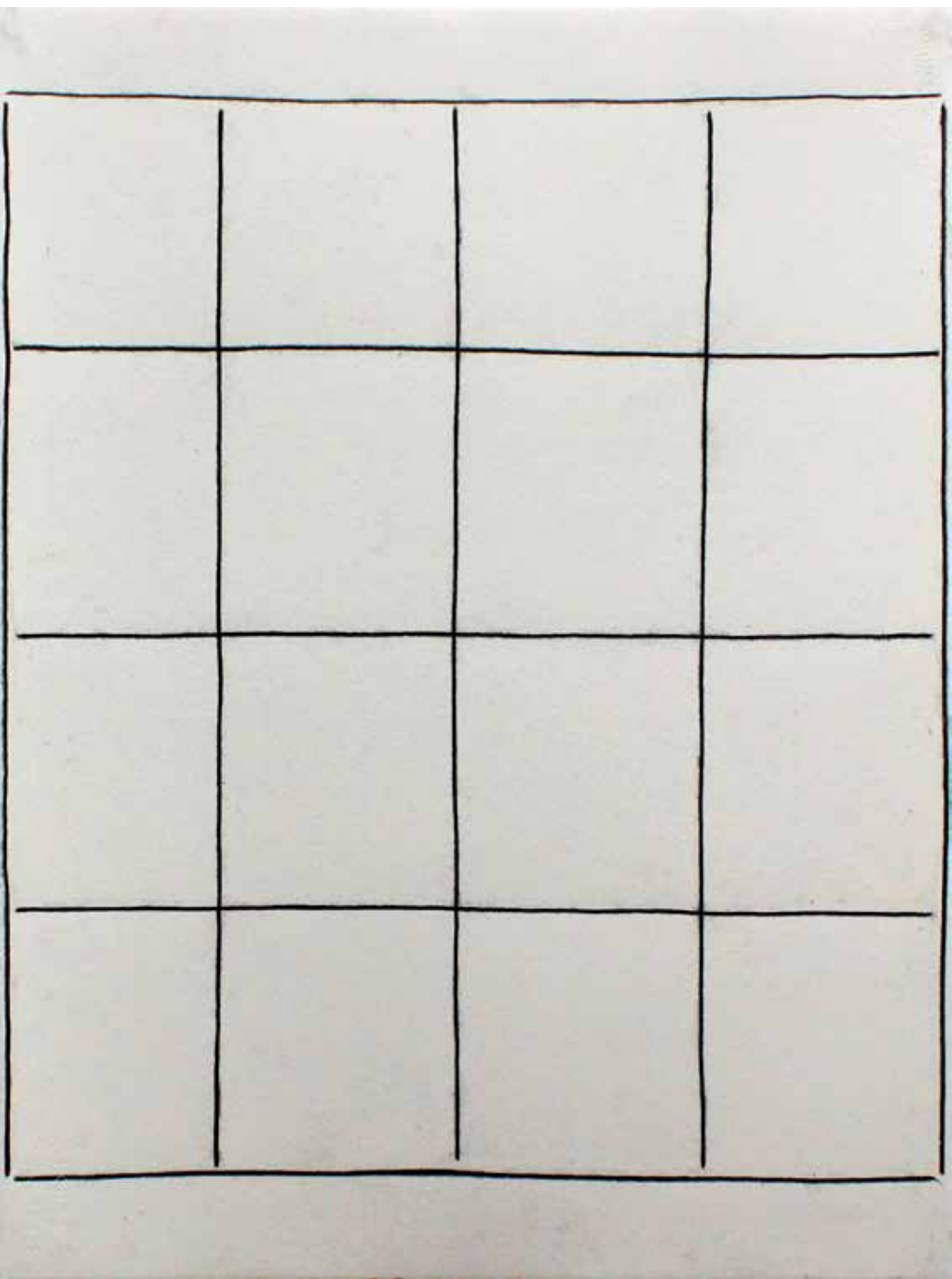






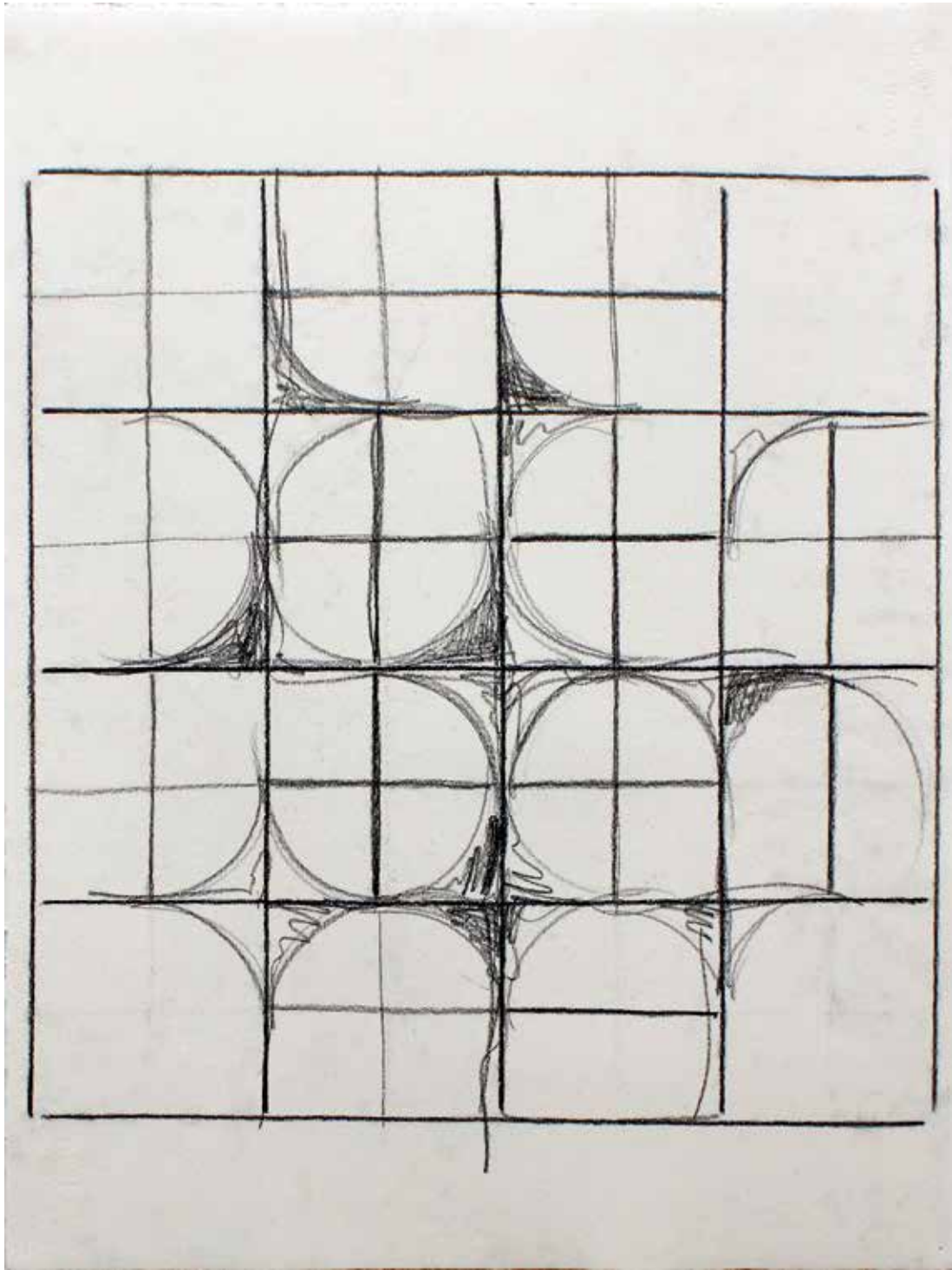


29/03/2005 I, Casa Buonarroti, Cornered Out, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

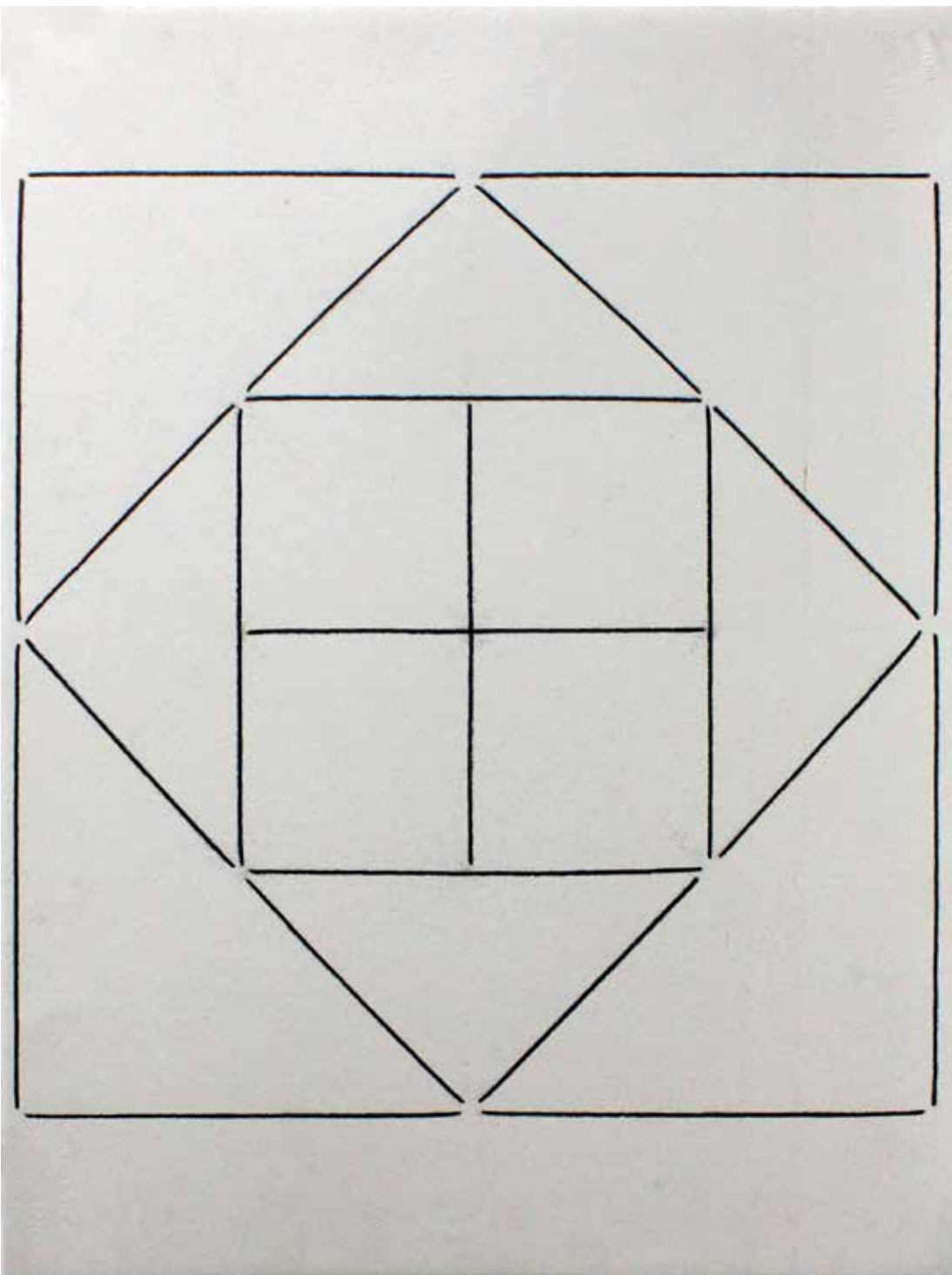


02/02/2016 I, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

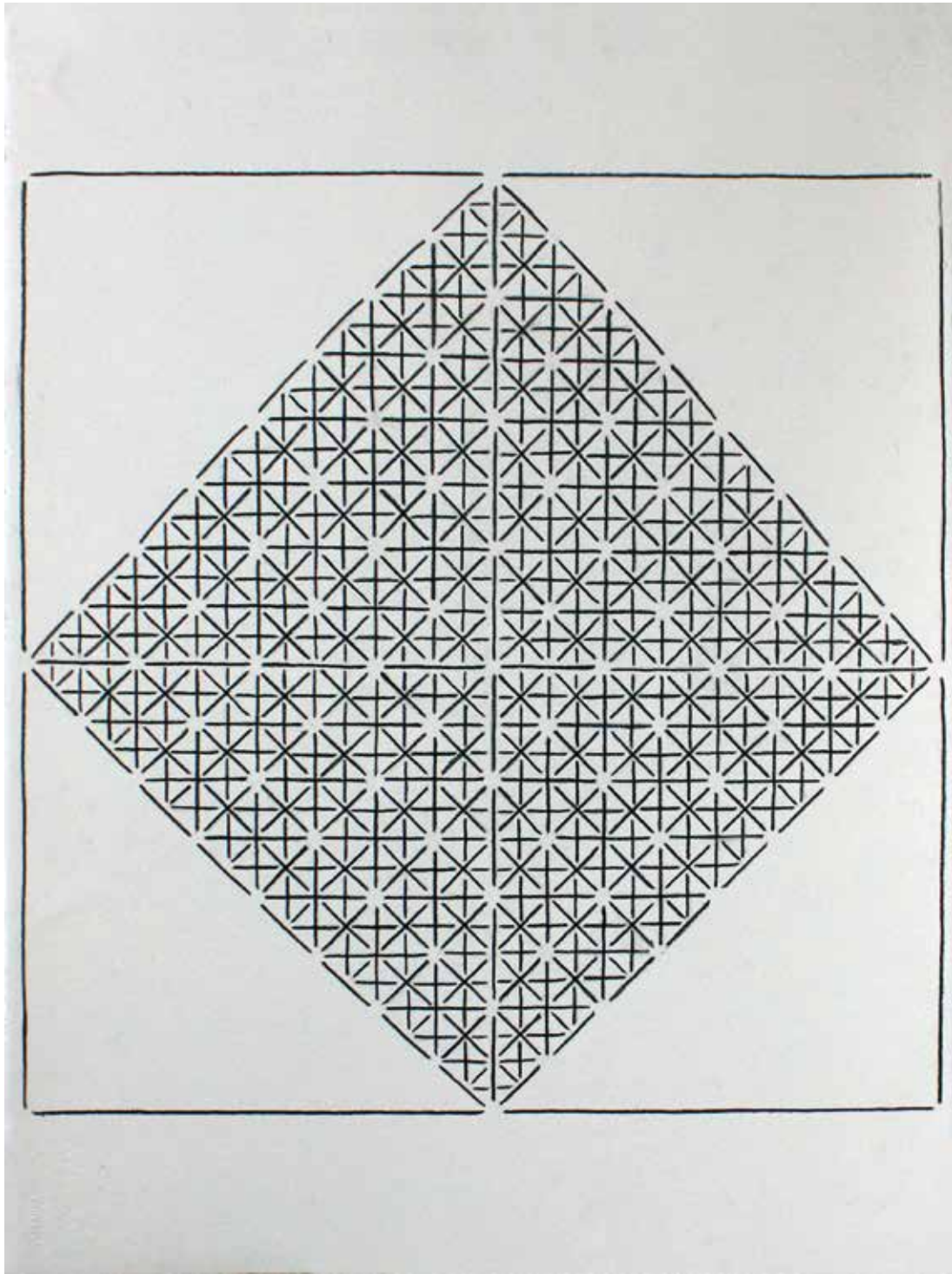




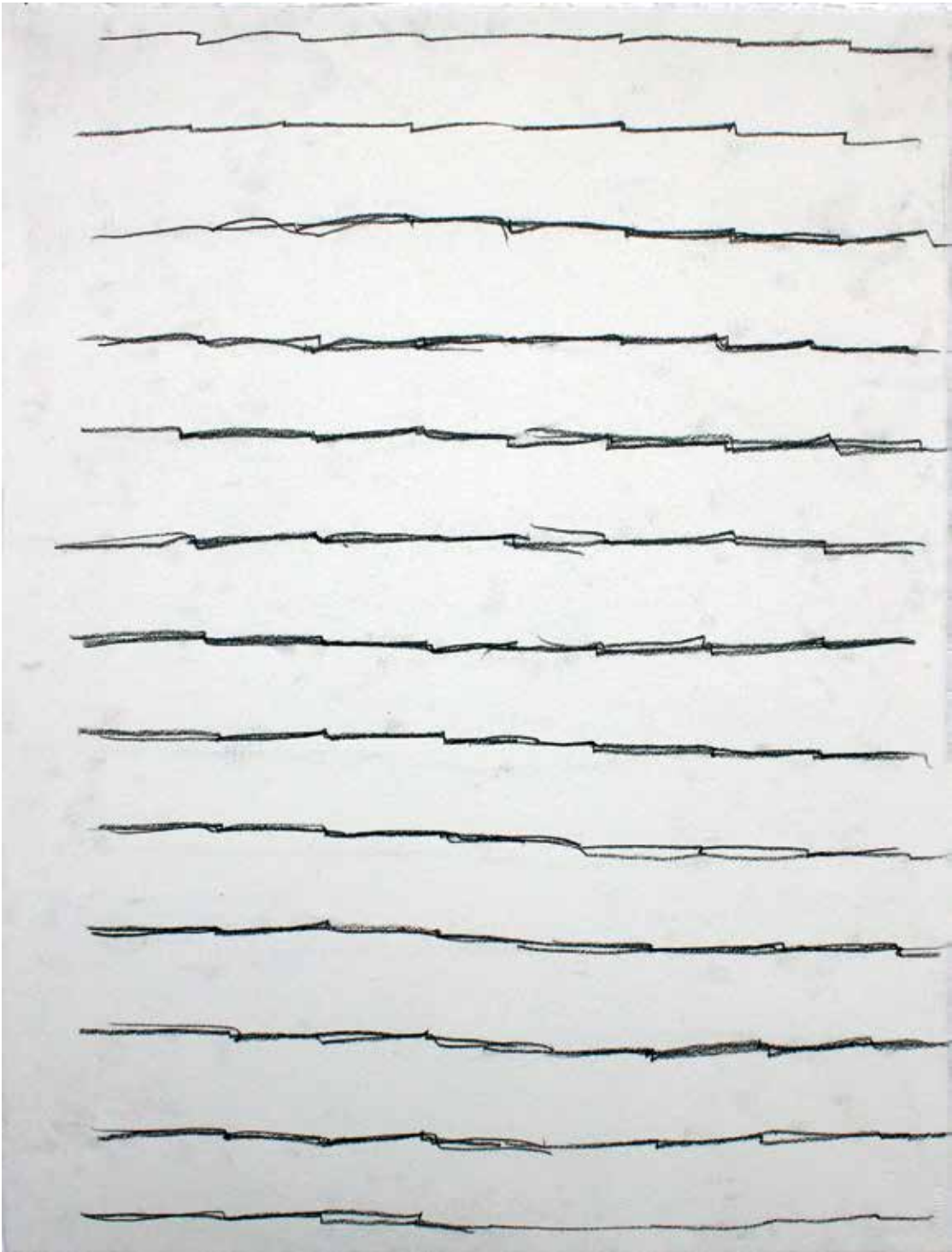
20/04/2014 I Old + New, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm



13/02/2016 II, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

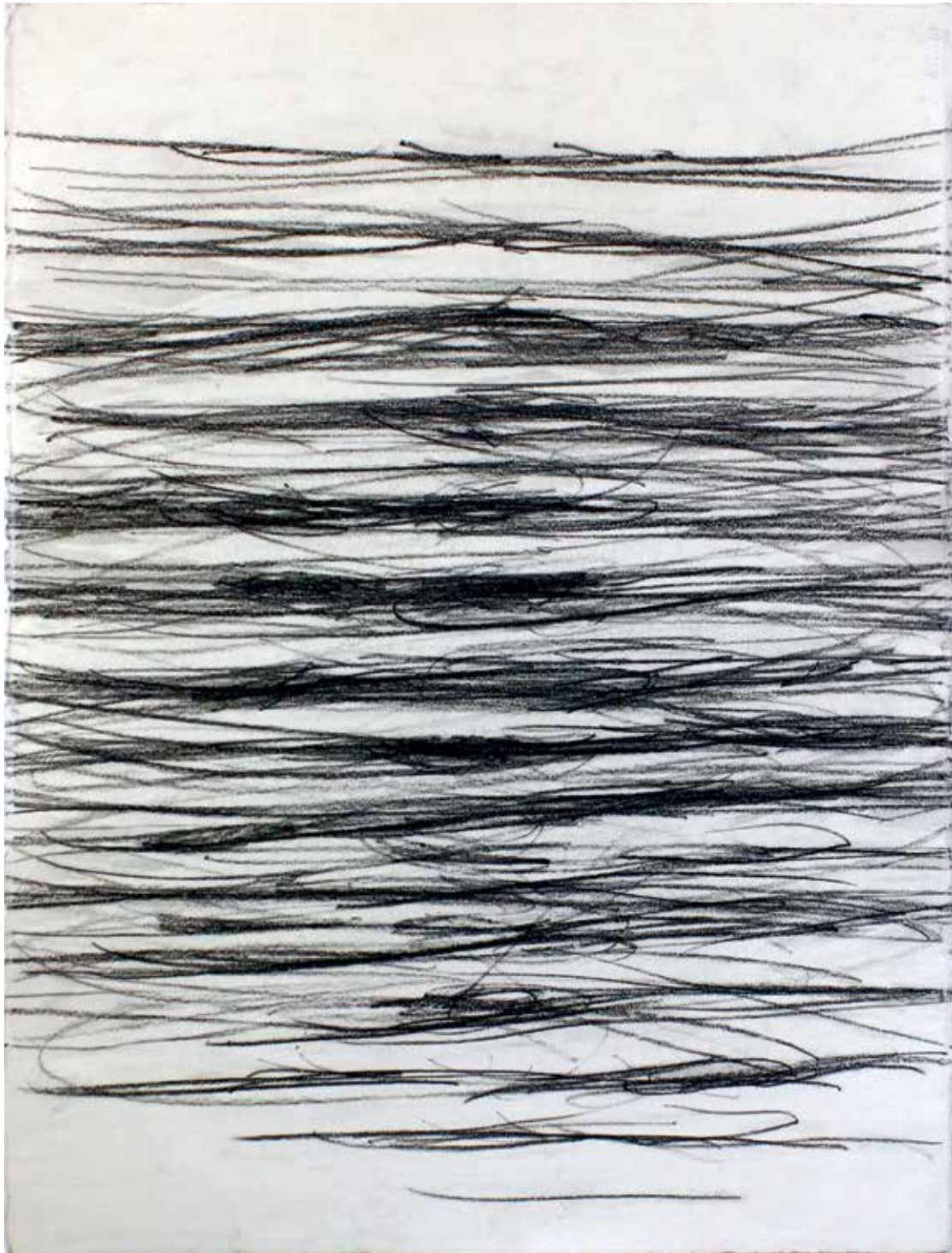


27/10/2015, Time is the River which sweeps me along...Forget. But I mark my way. One Day, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm



27/05/1998, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm



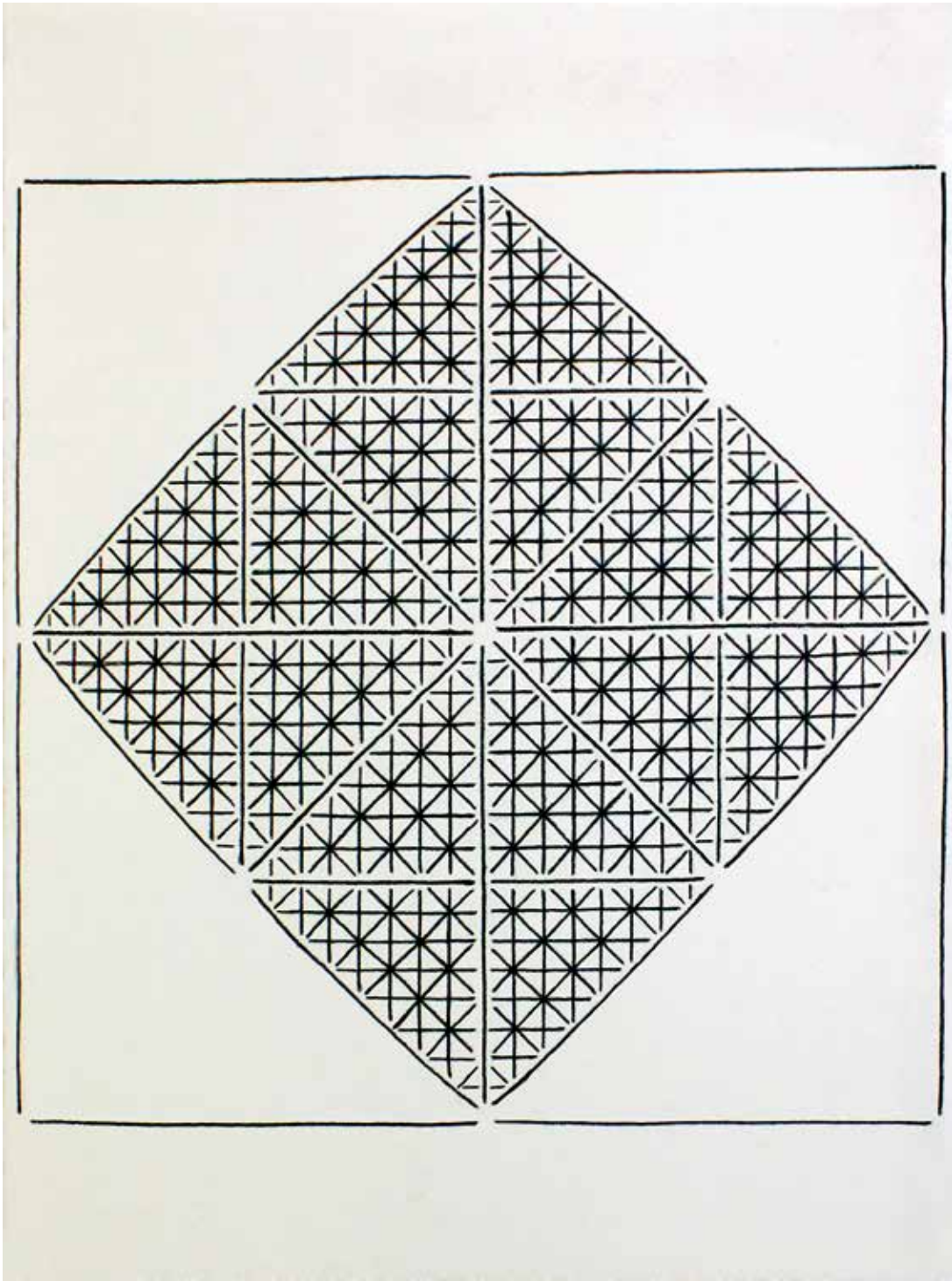


22/07/1998, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

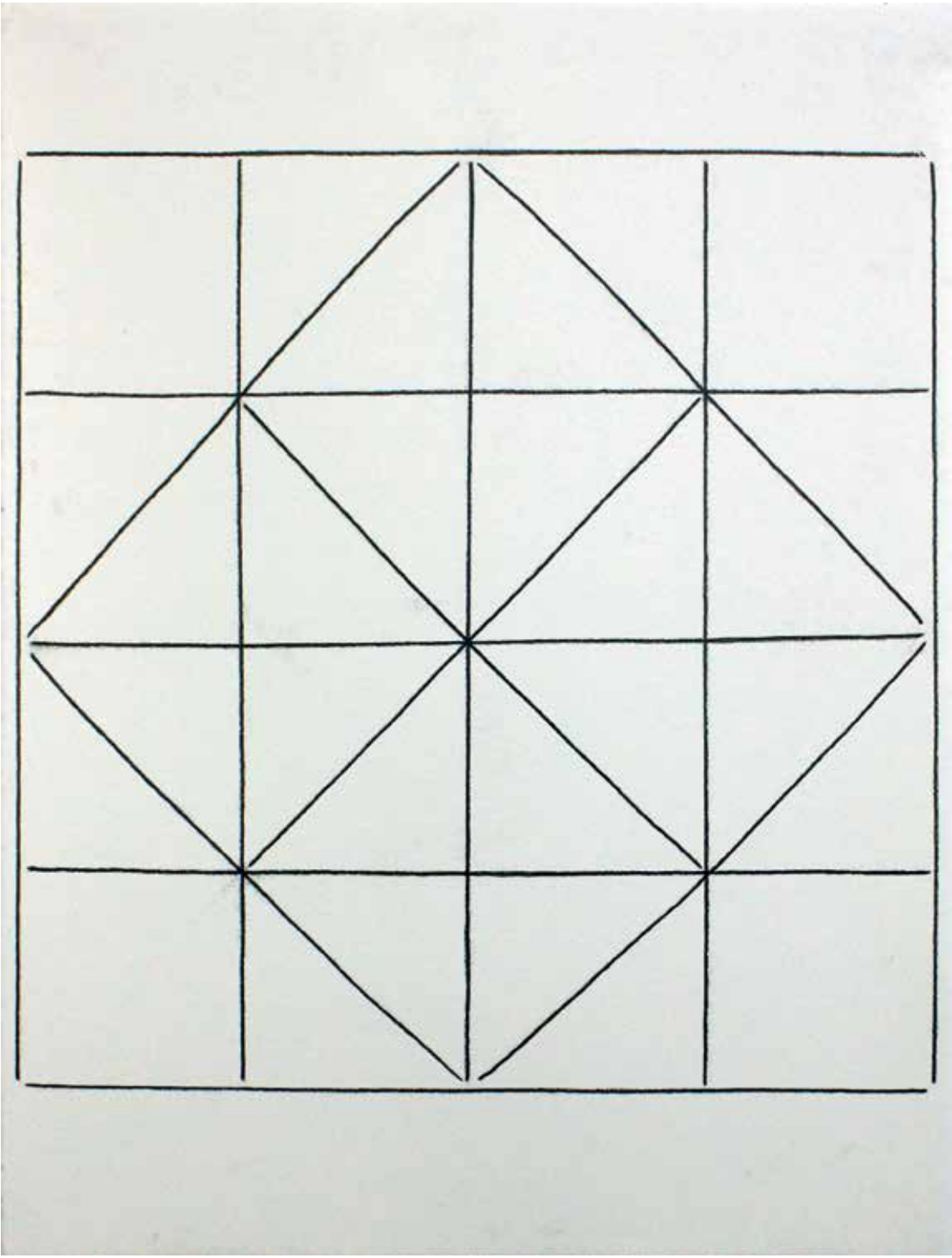


Untitled, 1993, ink, graphite and turpentine, 44 x 36.5 cm

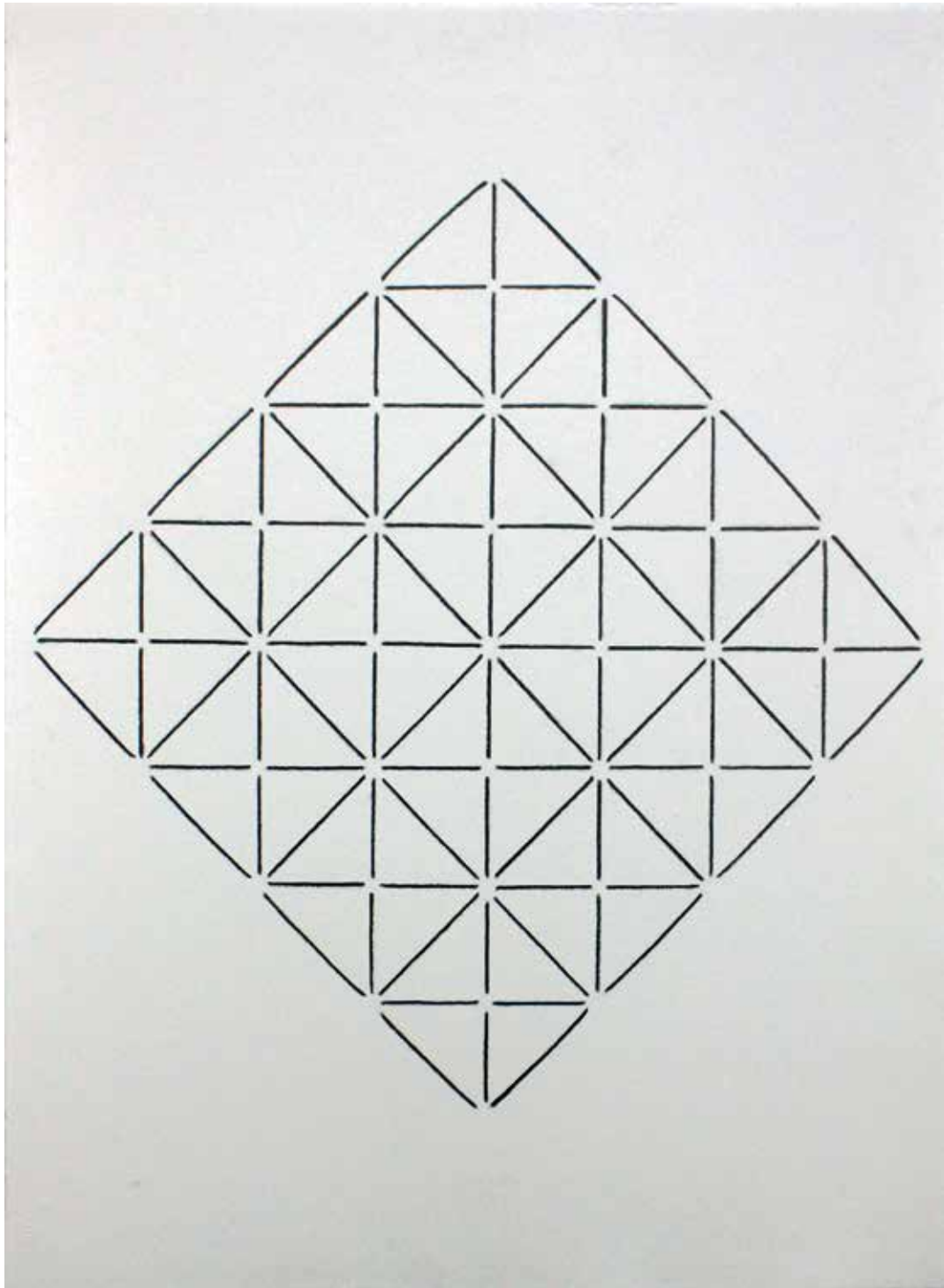




15, 16, 17/11/2015, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm



13/10/2015, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm



10/02/2016 II, Another re-reach, re-formation, re-place. *The Final Bond*, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

*Part Two*

**STUDIO JOTTINGS  
2004–2017**



## Linda Karshan: Jottings

Helen Higgins

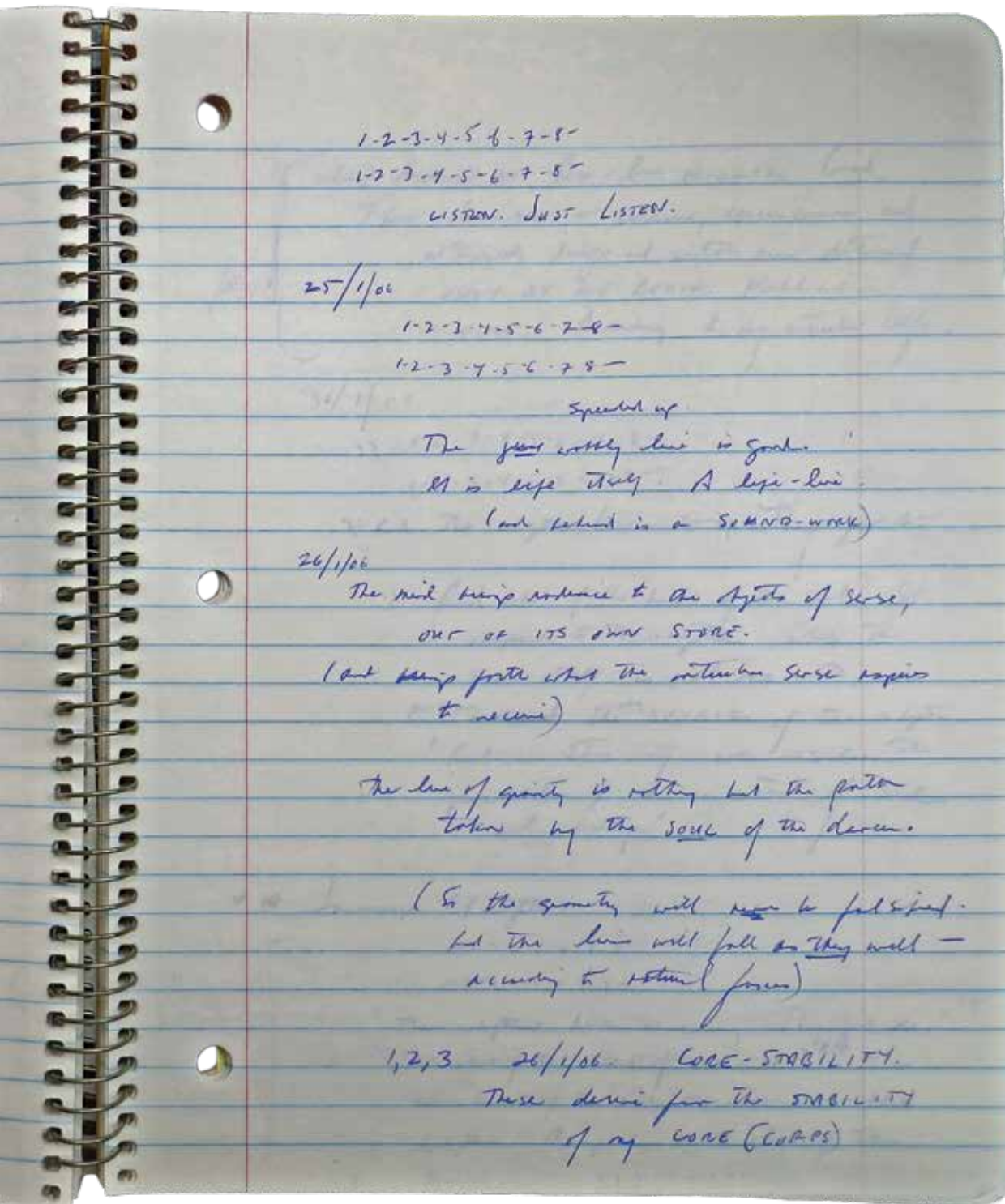
“Let no day pass without leaving a mark of oneself.”

Linda had these precise words in mind when she took her notebook into the studio in the summer of 2004. Concerned that her drawing would stall following three museum shows, she began to keep a notebook in which to leave her daily mark. The resulting studio jottings form brief writings – trials, perhaps – which track Linda’s movements in the studio and her thinking, too, as she seeks to understand the human experience and to transform it into visual means.

The jottings bring together much of what Linda has learned in the studio over the past decade, always testing that experience against her findings as a ‘common reader’. Linda’s intellectual curiosity and wide reading has led her to find correspondence between her work and the writings of an eclectic range of authors, such as Alberti’s *Della Pittura*, Heinrich von Kleist’s ‘On the Marionette Theatre’, and Mircea Eliade’s *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, as well as works by Jorge Luis Borges, Saul Bellow, Samuel Beckett and Plato. Linda also reads widely on subjects such as geology, geometry (which to Linda is second nature), prehistoric stone patterns, and labyrinths and mazes.

Linda’s initial jottings helped her to understand and move her work forward, allowing her to track her thinking and drawings simultaneously. Gradually, the jottings evolved from a discursive to an increasingly essayistic approach, as she strove to capture the essence of each season. Like the drawings themselves, the jottings became increasingly spare. Steadily the writing began to take on the rhythm of the work, while “complexity came rushing back” in the form of the ‘photo jottings’. Working together, as Linda dictated the words to me, speaking in her rhythm, we were able not only to capture their spontaneous nature but also adjust and improvise along the way. This allowed us to be nimble and – together – select and place the images where they would make the most sense, both rhythmically and aesthetically. It was precisely this collaboration that gave rise to the way the newer jottings ‘lift off’. These photo jottings were further embellished with photos and film stills from Ishmael Annobil and Harald Schluttig, as the documentation of Linda’s working processes became increasingly important.

As I write, the studio jottings continue, with Linda ‘going on and getting on’, as ever.



Helen Higgins

A page from a 2006 notebook of LK's jottings

**Particular Forms**  
*Summer 2004*

“We must recognize our particular form, the instrument that each of us who carries anything – carries in his being. Mastering this instrument, learning to play it to perfection – that’s what I call duty, what I call conduct, what I call success.” Henry James, *The Tragic Muse*

“...so that the presentation will lay hold on the emotions as human experience – will, as you say, ‘flash’ conviction on the world by means of aroused sympathy.” George Eliot to Frederic Harrison, 1866

“I think I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain.” Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

“Exactitude winged by intuition.” Paul Klee

“The curve is subsumed... in those unstraight lines.” Michael Harrison

“The purpose of rhythm, it has always seemed to me, is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake, which is the one moment of creation, by hushing us with an alluring monotony, while it holds us waking by variety, to keep us in that stage of perhaps real trance, in which the mind, liberated from the pressure of the will, is unfolded in symbols.” Yeats, ‘The Symbolism of Poetry’

“...where virtuosity – to no end – is the principle of life, when a thousand variations of three simple movements fill up the time...” Hugh Kenner on Beckett, 1961

“To conceal intention under an appearance of dreamlike fortuity.” Frank Kermode on Beckett

“These are not ritual rules but physical laws.” Clark Coolidge on Beckett’s *Quad*

“The line of gravity can sometimes be curved (it’s very mysterious); it’s the path taken by the soul of the dancer.” LK quoting Heinrich von Kleist’s ‘On the Marionette Theatre’

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**Flashing Conviction**  
*Summer 2004*

Staying in stone at least awhile more.

Rhythms and movement: following the sound.  
The form is the result (of the movement).  
The plasticity comes from the rhythm; the PACE.

11/07/04 Molloy knows he needs a method but he needs his mind in the game.

Measure without measure, coming out of the rhythms and movements of the body.

Like Michelangelo's compasses in the eyes; to judge measure and proportion.

To perform *Quad*, it helps to be a dancer – paraphrase of Beckett's notes on *Quad*.

12/07/04 Beckett's heroes describe lines and curves of relationships. As in *The Unnamable*.

Printmaking concerns come into play: the clarity of the line matters: and 'wiping the plate clean'.

13/07/04 I'm interested in how those marks and traces come into being, and how they have the power to move the viewer. George Eliot tells me how: by flashing conviction on the world (the viewer) through 'aroused sympathy'.

The length of the line (its measure) is exactly as long as the time it takes to be made. (The measure of space is the measure of time.)

12/08/04 Man marks himself vertically: it's the ground, the earth, that moves. That's what makes the grid, the cross. That's how we get the grid.

It is the purpose of rhythm to induce that dreamlike state.

13/08/04 A sense of inevitability guides the work (so it must be).

Eternity, and time:

Every dance in time has a sacred model: look at Molloy with his stones.

20/08/04 And further: Molloy – "but this was only a makeshift, that could not long satisfy a man like me". Molloy, on turning his stones without a method. Then: "But to suck the stones as I have described, not haphazard, but with method, was also, I think, a bodily need". Molloy's other bodily need is his BALANCE. Leaning into the wind, like a sail, so as to KEEP ON GOING. UPRIGHT, yet "existence is a curve" (Sartre).

Giving the simplest lines meaning. ATTENUATED MEANING.

Drawing through the page with the entire body: much more, even, than from the shoulder. Securing my position, one foot braced behind, in order to move vertically across the page, top to bottom. It's a dance through the page, not over it.

21/08/04 Every drawing must contain all that I know, the whole of my experience, as it has been integrated, and understood.

There are so few notes, but so many variations.

The sureness of the rhythm, as experienced in the work, helps to FLASH CONVICTION on the viewer by means of aroused sympathy.

23/08/04 And listen to the sounds of the work. They keep me in place, and in pace.

26/08/04 A method, yes, but no plan: knowing gives way to intuition, and to chance, while the organic takes hold in my scheme.

27/08/04 Karshan's characters [drawings] describe lines and curves of relationships.

28/08/04 New table – a door – new sound. Drawing on this new surface is like carving anew. The surface is soft, but firm; the sound is soft, but pronounced. Breath. It sounds like human breathing. A breathing machine. Rhythmic, repetitive.

Thus the classical form, the classical canon. In accordance with man's body, his proportions... and the numbers and rhythms of the universe.

I am always choreographing the page: smiling, swaying, but never, never slouching.

04/09/04 "Two feet walking." Giacometti, when asked about his studio. Listen to the sound, the natural rhythm

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

"Standing gracefully upright and alert." Re-reading Jill Lloyd, Redfern catalogue

06/09/04 The compasses in the eyes of Michelangelo, and his architectural drawings made – astonishingly – by turning them around 90° or 180°. For probably 1½–2 years I often think, while working, as I take up whatever existing trace I can muster, that I start off like



Leonardo, to unleash the unconscious. But once the numbers, rhythms and turning sets in – takes hold – I operate like Michelangelo. Like a sculptor, or architect. IN THE ROUND.

And the concentration, and the PACE. The plasticity comes from the rhythm.

Again, what is arresting to see now, is how the drawings of 2004 (July and August) remind me of those first ‘grids’ of 1995: it’s the way they sit – lean – on the page. They lean into the wind, so as to keep on going.

“Listening to sound is a sculptural act; the ear, as Joseph Beuys said, is the genuine sense of sculpture.” Matthias Bärmann, in a note to me

Yes, I listen, I carve, I sculpt. I make my way with exactitude winged by intuition, always leaning into the wind just a little, so as to keep on going.

JUST LISTEN! The ear is the genuine sense of sculpture!

“TO OBSERVE THE OBVERSE.” – Oswald Egger

JUST LISTEN...

\* \* \*

Selected Jottings

Autumn 2004 (re-arranged and annotated January 2005)

Do start. By the Sound of It:

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

LISTEN. Just Listen. “Listening to the sound is a sculptural act. The ear... is the genuine sense of sculpture.” Matthias Bärmann, quoting Joseph Beuys

5/10/04

Yesterday’s drawings, the ‘Casa Buonarroti Series,’ are ‘sculpted,’ and muscular.<sup>1</sup> They ‘reach out,’ and feel as if they were drawn with a chisel.

<sup>1</sup> So named, because of the comparison presented by Alison Wright in her illustrated talk at Sir John Soane’s Museum in London, 22 October 2004. She juxtaposed a drawing of mine with Michelangelo’s rendering of his house, the Casa Buonarroti. This talk was entitled ‘Compasses in the Eyes’.

Vasari tells us that Michelangelo used his chisel like a pencil; I feel I use my pencil like a chisel. And like him, I ‘chisel’ every day.<sup>2</sup> Daily practice.

We also learn that while he said he worked with his hands, he said the real artist must judge with “the compasses in the eyes”.<sup>3</sup> This judgement is innate, a “measure without measure”.<sup>4</sup> We might even straighten up, or sway in response to the good work.<sup>5</sup>

In this way, we can edit, and make a SELECTION FROM A DAY.

27/10/04

Foot-tapping. Always foot-tapping. And marching ‘round the studio’:

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

‘Round’ the studio, but in the shape of a square, or quad:

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 turn  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 turn

“I think I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain... but the best is to think of myself as fixed at the centre of the place, whatever the shape and extent may be.” Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

While my ‘assigned figure’ remains constant – my movement, in time – the shape and extent of my trajectory will change. That’s how the work DEVELOPS (WHILE FUNDAMENTALLY STAYING THE SAME).

25/11/04

Tot Taylor calls my movement round the studio the ‘Fred Astaire Walk’. He says it is graceful, like Astaire’s.

Perhaps it is the timing, and my posture, my line:

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

This ‘timing’ is also recorded on 20/10/04, 25/10/04, 29/10/04, 3/11/04, 22/11/04, 25/11/04, 29/11/04, 30/11/04, and 7/12/04.

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Vasari, ‘Michelangelo Buonarroti’, in *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, translated by Gaston de Vere and with an introduction by David Ekserdjian, in 2 volumes (London: Everyman’s Library, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> This title was suggested by Karshan, and is a translation from a text on her work by Anca Vasiliu, ‘measure sans measure’, from the book *Le temps, Lui, Time Being* (Paris: Les Editions Signum, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Linda Karshan, ‘The Greek Thing’. In the exhibition ‘Constellation and Chance’ at the Redfern Gallery, London, 21 September–21 October 2004.

DAILY PRACTICE and REPETITION: “The rhythms keep on coming. They just do” (Merce Cunningham)

27/11/04 And circling around the centre: “I am as the centre of the circle, to which all parts of the circumference stand in equal relation; you, however, are not so.” (Dante, *Vita Nuova*, XII, 21–23)

Thus love, in the form of an angel, speaks to the poet, and gives himself a mystic definition.

Compare it to Beckett’s ‘rendition’ on the poet, and his position on the CENTRE:

“I think that I occupy the centre, but nothing is less certain. In a sense I would be better off at the circumference, since my eyes are fixed always in the same direction... From centre to circumference in any case is a far cry and I may well be situated somewhere between the two... But the best is to think of myself as fixed at the centre of this place, whatever its shape and extent may be.” Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

Like Dante, of whom Beckett was a scholar, Beckett knew his position to be precarious.<sup>6</sup> Only LOVE, in the transitional figure of an angel, can hold the centre with certainty, and be NAMED. The poet is left to circle around the centre, in time, in obedience to that figure assigned to him. He is a moving image of eternity, never resting in unity, but moving according to number. “And this image we call TIME.”<sup>7</sup>

All we can know, with certainty, is that the rhythms keep on coming, they just do. That’s how we go on, and get on...

28/11/04 Folko Jungnitsch says my drawings are like music: “The capture of fluent time”.

That we are both searching for the perfect line, and that “the line must be in its time”.<sup>8</sup>

30/11/04 The day after the performance and talk by Christian Wolff at Kettle’s Yard:<sup>9</sup>

I was struck by his concentration as he followed his sounds, with

6 *Not knowing* was Beckett’s business: he had little to say about the meaning and background of his work; he issued universal questions, but offered no answers.

7 Plato, *Timaeus*, translated by Benjamin Jowett.

8 Folko Jungnitsch, in a conversation in the studio.

9 Christian Wolff at Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge, 1 November 2004, in celebration of 70 years.

his eyes and his hands. And how he instantly corrected any false note. “Each note has its own centre,” John Cage told him. And he was taught to play each note exactly as it was written. “Each [note] in its time.” Follow the music, as it is scored.

This is what I do, as closely as possible, and for as long as I can sustain the necessary, unimpinged-upon concentration:

The internal score – the rhythm  
The sounded score – the sounds  
The chiselled score, already traced onto the sheet from the preceding work  
WHILE staying in PLACE, and IN PACE.

01/12/04 And circling around the centre. Today’s series, 1–7, +8 (+9) felt like ‘recordings’, as I turned ‘round the centre LIKE A PHONOGRAPH NEEDLE (the OLD STYLE!). My pencil point held the incised grooves (of the preceding work), and the rhythms [kept] on coming; they just did. The ‘hole’ in the ‘record’ was also recorded, as that central point of light where the lines start, and stop, to precision.

Looking at this series, pinned to the wall, most striking is that central POINT OF LIGHT. VARYING SLIGHTLY from work to work, it is the punctuation, and meaning, of the series.

21/12/04 1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–

25/12/04 1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–

26/12/04 The ‘Fred Astaire Walk’ could equally be called The Beckett Walk (as in the title of a drawing by Bruce Nauman).

“Every movement in the studio must be artistic.” Bruce Nauman<sup>10</sup>

NOTE: And graceful. Full of grace. In good posture.

27/12/04 A friend of Duchamp said of him that “his finest work is his use of time”.<sup>11</sup> *Walkaround Time*, the title of a work by Merce

10 Bruce Nauman, ‘Mapping the Studio’, Tate Modern, October 2004. On display to accompany *Raw Materials*, his Turbine Hall sound installation, a retrospective of the sound of his video work, arranged, as he said, as need be.

11 Rachel Cohen, ‘John Cage and Marcel Duchamp’, in *A Chance Meeting: Intertwined Lives of American Writers and Artists, 1854–1967* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004), p. 300. See also Marilyn McCully, *Measure Without Measure: The Art of Linda Karshan* (London: Cacklegoose Press, 2001), for the mention of Karshan’s early interest in Duchamp’s work *Nude Descending a Staircase*.

Selected Jottings  
and Reflections  
January–June 2005

Cunningham, with sets designed by Marcel Duchamp, and built by Jasper Johns. On Marcel Duchamp: “his fundamental work was because he chose it, and because it happened to him, by chance” (*A Chance Encounter*, p. 302)

28/12/04 The good drawings, as Victor Skipp said, are found objects.<sup>12</sup>

Thanks to repetition, and to daily practice: “where 1000 variations of three simple movements fill up the time between train and train.” Hugh Kenner on Beckett, 1961

But always with one’s mind in the game, or “this would put [one] off stone forever, and in a very short time”. And at the same time, not being afraid to fail: “To be an artist is to fail”.<sup>13</sup>

So we must judge, and edit, with those ‘compasses in the eyes,’ choosing only those works that flash conviction on the viewer through aroused sympathy.<sup>14</sup>

29/12/04 With Werner Klein, in Cologne, inspecting and judging ‘days, Autumn 2004’. Werner noted how crucial selection has become, and proposes the work be called a Selection from a Day.

30/12/04 See *Casa Buonarroti Series*, I–IV

“ALL TRUE GRACE IS ECONOMICAL” Beckett

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“My fundamental work is the way that I work,” and that I go on. How I stand and move in the studio is crucial to the work: every movement must be graceful, and “All is economical” (Beckett).

With the sheet flat on the table, ‘listening to’ those internal numbers and rhythms that guide my moves, I work my way round the page, turning the paper anti-clockwise through 90° on the stroke of 2, 4, 8 or 16 before starting the count again.

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8 turn  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8 turn

5/01/05 “Where 1000 variations of three simple movements fill up the time between train and train.” Hugh Kenner on Beckett

12 Victor Skipp in conversation with Linda Karshan at The Redfern Gallery, looking at the exhibition ‘Constellation and Chance’, October 2004.

13 Samuel Beckett, in *Molloy* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966) and *Three Dialogues with George Duthuit* (London: John Calder, 1969).

14 George Eliot. See studio jotting, ‘Flashing Conviction, Summer 2004’.

And also like Beckett, it is the FOOT-FALLS that matter: “It is about the pacing... The fall of the feet. The sound of feet... The words are less important...” (Beckett, in *Conversations with and about Beckett* by Mel Gussow, p. 34).

This is how I begin each day: by the sound of my feet on the studio floor.

4/02/05 And then capturing the sound in my marks. This I do, as ever, with “exactitude winged by intuition” (Klee), and with “diligence joined with quickness” so as to bring “promptness” and “dispatch” to the work (Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*).

5/02/05 Each drawing has its own ‘sound-work’ behind it. You could explore each drawing “movement by movement” (Folko Jungnitsch, conductor).

28/02/05 “Attention must be paid!” says Arthur Miller in *Death of a Salesman*. Yes. Attention must be paid to the sound, and to the precision of the line that captures it.

1/03/05 Standing, always, with CORE-STABILITY (stability of my corps). This stable centre is what gives the work its strength, symmetry, balance and grace.

Finding the right posture: standing with feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent, shoulders relaxed but always LIFTING FROM THE CENTRE: This is my centre of gravity. Now I can begin, and begin again. And fail. “And next time fail better” (Beckett).

6/03/05 While always in alignment (line-meant). What does the line mean? When it is graceful, when it follows the line of gravity, “it is nothing but the path taken by the soul of the dancer” (Heinrich von Kleist).

It is a self-portrait.

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–

18/03/05 And the capture of “fluent time” (Folko Jungnitsch).

21/03/05 Reading about Montaigne’s *Essays*, how they developed from SELF-STUDY to SELF-PORTRAITURE. YES.

1983–94: SELF-STUDY (through automatism and organic abstraction: waiting for my figure/pattern to emerge).

1994: The Self-Portrait appears: the WAY THAT I WORK.  
1994–present: The SELF-PORTRAIT develops, in direct response to the changing subject.

Montaigne:  
1. The self-portrait must remain faithful to the subject, changing as the subject does.  
– for me, becoming increasingly pared-down, essential, yet at the same time more complex.  
2. Everyone who listens to himself will discover a PATTERN ALL HIS OWN.  
– I can hear mine; it’s my numbers and rhythms, complete with directions to turn. (This is my RULING PATTERN to which obedience must be paid!)

22/03/05 I am, since 1994, SQUARING THE CIRCLE, in time, under conditions of JUST ENOUGH gravity to hold my marks in equilibrium.

24/03/05 A note on gravity: I learn from Matthias Bärmann that the meteorites I see in his home, arranged on a tray like a miniature garden, were produced under conditions of ZERO GRAVITY. The oldest one, he says, is 4.8 billion years old. And they came from “TEXAS and OUTER SPACE”.

What to say about the regular, grid-like forms one observes on these cross-sections of time and space?

“What do I know about man’s destiny? I could tell you more about radishes.” Beckett, in *Conversations with and about Beckett* by Mel Gussow, p. 79

25/03/05 Back in Renaissance Space, reading Alberti’s *On Painting*:  
  
– we learn that his knowledge of painting came from his own practice. Good.  
– that he was interested, too, in a control of words.  
He learned from Cicero a method of ANALYSIS and SYNTHESIS.

26/03/05 We need both: “His was a brilliant mind that could both analyse and synthesize.” Eulogy for my father

27/03/05 Alberti: On the ORLO – the outline – and VISUAL APPEARANCES.

The ORLO marks the extreme limits of the subject (body). So it must be PRECISE.

One could describe the body by its OUTLINE alone:  
by the length, the breadth, and by the QUALITY OF THE LINE.  
– this quality of the line is what I’m after.

“There must be no filling in.” Marcel Duchamp

28/03/05 As in those ‘painstaking grids’ – those ‘wheels of incised lines...’ of Michelangelo.  
Alison Wright – compared by her with my own incised grids.

1/04/05 And like Apelles, too. I am after the MOST PERFECT LINE, yet made and measured by man alone.

With a SOUND-WORK behind it, which can resonate with the viewer.

2/04/05 Alberti again: I ‘happen’ to build my drawings just as he recommends:  
– divide each line in half, and in half again. YES  
– divide each quadrangle into 4 more quadrangles of equal proportion. YES  
– to inscribe a circle within a square, divide the square into 4 equal quarters with a horizontal and a vertical line. YES. Diagonally connect these 4 half-points, forming a diamond shape. YES. Draw an arc to connect these points of the diamond. YES

THE DIRECTIONS ARE INTERNAL TO ME AS I COUNT AND TURN

4/04/05 Here is a poem by Charles Olson (shown to me by Tamar Yoseloff):

An American  
is a complex of occasions  
themselves a geometry  
of spatial nature.

I have this sense,  
that I am one  
with my skin.<sup>15</sup>

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

15 ‘Maximus to Gloucester, Letter 27 [withheld]’, from Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 185

Now, drawing ONLY THE CORNERS of the square is enough to indicate the whole (form *and* movement).

Or marking only a short dash of line at the TOP, BOTTOM, LEFT and RIGHT sides (of the otherwise invisible square).

17/04/05 Richard Selby remarks that he can ‘see’ the oval/circle in the form. PERFECT. (So, of course, can I).

“If we think of the forms and light of other days it is without regret.” Beckett, *Molloy*

Yes. Because in them we see the ORIGINS of today.

24/04/05 Alberti: Better to correct the errors of the mind than to remove them from the drawings.

– The mind, moved and warmed by experience gives greater PROMPTNESS and DISPATCH to the work.  
So practice. Daily practice.

6/05/05 Saul Bellow dies; I feel the loss.

“They told me that the truth of the universe was inscribed into our very bones. That the human skeleton was itself a hieroglyph. That everything we had ever known on earth was shown to us in the first days after death. That our experience of the world was desired by the cosmos, and needed by it for its own renewal.” Bellow, ‘Something to Remember Me By’

5/06/05 Matthias promises to get for me a small meteorite for my 60th birthday. I hope – I expect – this small slice of the universe will be inscribed with marks like my own:

HORIZONTALS and VERTICALS, never confused.  
Leaning into the wind, just a little, so as to  
KEEP ON GOING.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

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**The ORLO, Natural Forces, and Giving Up the Notion of Convergence**  
*Summer 2005*

‘Kicking off’ with the ORLO – that extreme limit, or outline, of my pattern / figure / form, the subject of this summer’s work has shifted between the ORLO to the GRID and back again. According to my intuitive sense.

But the ORLO has been the most dominant form, showing – if not proving – that length, width, and quality of line are enough to describe the entire body.<sup>16</sup>

So long as the ORLO be precise.

Natural forces have returned, thanks to a change in posture, necessitated by the expansion of the form.<sup>17</sup> In consequence, my more plastic, rhythmic lines refused to converge: drawing line upon trace, as had been my custom, now required too much will. (The trace leaned in one direction, while the line wanted, naturally, to lean in the other).

So by giving up the notion of convergence, and letting each line fall as it would, the drawings recovered their former ‘swing’. They could ‘flash conviction’<sup>18</sup> on the viewer, of their human experience. According to her intuitive sense.<sup>19</sup>

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**The New York Tour**  
*Autumn 2005*

I arrived in N.Y. like a dancer on tour with my body, my mind, and choreography in-scribed.<sup>20</sup> But the ‘theatre’ was new, as was the stage to be ‘set,’ and so certain adjustments were made.

Standing upright and alert at my new table, or stage, I quickly adjusted my stance: “Every movement in the studio must be [graceful].”<sup>21</sup> And “all true grace is economical”.<sup>22</sup>

16 Leon Battista Alberti. See studio jottings, ‘Selected Jottings and Reflections, January–June 2005’ (23/03/05).

17 Now bent at the waist, reaching out and over my trace in order to pick up the top-most point of my trace. By simply swinging up and back to my standing posture, the drawn line flowed naturally, in line with the forces of gravity.

18 George Eliot. See studio jotting, ‘Summer Jottings: Flashing Conviction, July–August 2004’.

19 Many thanks to Tommy Karshan, for alerting me to Schiller’s definition of the play-drive: “[...] will endeavour so as to receive as if it had brought forth, and so bring forth as the intuitive sense aspires to receive”. See Schiller’s *Letters Upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Or, in the words of Plotinus, *Ennead* IV 6.2–3: “The mind affirms something not contained within impression: this is the characteristic of a *power* – within its allotted sphere to act”. Or, as David Wiggins puts it, quoting Plotinus: “The mind gives radiance to the objects of sense *out of its own store*”. A jotting that I wrote on 1 August 2005 also helps to illustrate what I mean: “I am bent at the waist, over the page, arm (with graphite) extended to the top of the [trace]. Lifting now from the waist, the line is drawn over and through the sheet in a smooth movement... guided always by natural forces. (So that the *viewer, too, might straighten up* in response to the good work).”

20 My choreography is not only written, or in-scribed: it is also sounded, or scored into my being. This is what I listen to, and what I mark out “exactly as it is scored” (John Cage, advising Christian Wolff; see studio jottings, ‘Selected Jottings, Autumn 2004’, 6/11/04).

21 Bruce Nauman: “Every movement in the studio must be artistic.” *Mapping the Studio*, Tate Modern, 2004.

22 Samuel Beckett. See studio jotting, ‘Selected Jottings, Autumn 2004’ (25/11/04).

My movements had become less than graceful – even cramped – as my short upper-torso was not long enough to see my now longer lines through in one arc.<sup>23</sup> So I resumed a stance first taken in July 2004 when, also presented with a new table/ stage, I secured my position by placing one foot behind the other, gaining extension and spring in my moves.<sup>24</sup>

Now my ‘swing’ has become more like rock’n’roll: I begin by rocking backwards, then forwards, or downwards, then upwards, through the first two repetitions of the line. Repetitions three and four are yet more dynamic as I roll right through the centre of my line.

That first line is performed ‘on the flat,’ as it were: both flat-footed, but also flat-leaded as I hold my pencil sideways, thus producing a flatish, widish mark.

Then, rising onto my toes, ‘en pointe’ over the work, I also lift my pencil point to a loftier position on the sheet. Thus poised and concentrated, I proceed to bisect that first line. Just as Apelles claimed to do.<sup>25</sup>

“There are so few [movements], but so many variations.”<sup>26</sup> The variety is assured by the subtle shifts in choreography, according to my intuitive sense. Judgement follows, measured always with those compasses in the eyes: that I may receive what I have brought forth, and “so bring forth as [my] intuitive sense aspires to receive”.<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \*

**Winter Statement**  
30 March 2006

My practice is not about reduction. The increasingly simple, yet complex, forms in the work are a marking out, in time, of an inner choreography: I draw out the numbers and rhythms as directly as possible. Changes in form are nothing but shifts of choreography.

“Dance is an action AND a thing.” Charles Olson, 25 May 1952, in a letter to Merce Cunningham

\* \* \*

23 See my description in the studio jotting ‘Summer 2005: The ORLO, Natural Forces, and Giving Up the Notion of Convergence’. Photographs also bear this out.

24 See studio jotting, ‘Flashing Conviction, Summer 2004’ (20/07/04).

25 According to ancient lore, the Roman artist Apelles proved his superiority over his rivals by his ability to bisect their lines. Thus he’d leave a mark of his presence: “Tell them Apelles was here”.

26 See studio jotting, ‘Flashing Conviction, Summer 2004’ (21/07/04).

27 See Schiller’s definition of the play-drive in note 19 above.

Spring 2006

“It’s a question of something that happens, almost a routine, and it is this dailiness and this materiality... that need to be brought out.”<sup>28</sup>

Forms ‘show up’, then shift in obedience to my intuitive sense. Here’s “what mind and body can do”.<sup>29</sup> And heart.

\* \* \*

**Two Clear Days**<sup>30</sup>  
Summer 2006

On the 17th and 18th of August, complexity re-entered the work: more movement of my body, remembered there, elaborated itself on the sheet.

But these forms were somehow heightened – even punctuated – as these complex marks-and-moves had learned a lot! Tracking out these smarter moves felt precarious, in the extreme: it was as if nothing was by chance, and yet everything was by chance.<sup>31</sup> I was breathless to get it right down on the page.

It helped, though, that these clearer days were also rather cool: with my fan turned off I could better hear, and listen, to the sound of my work.

“Listen. Just Listen”.<sup>32</sup> And in that way the rhythm took hold. And it kept me “in that state of perhaps real trance, in which the mind liberated from the pressure of the will is unfolded in symbols”.<sup>33</sup>

\* \* \*

**Proportional beauty, and action**  
Autumn 2006

“a body in motion is a body in thought...”<sup>34</sup>

Leonardo was looking for vital form, and analogy. He was constantly searching for a universal system of proportion that would explain the fundamental workings of forces. Further, he was the first to tie the artist’s notion of proportional beauty

28 Beckett, in notes to his German direction of *Waiting for Godot*.

29 Matthias Bärmann, in his opening remarks to the 15th-anniversary exhibition at Galerie Biedermann, Munich, April 2006.

30 *On a Clear Day*, 1973. The title of a suite of prints by Agnes Martin. Matthias Bärmann referred to it in the context of my work, saying, “On a clear day. That’s Linda Karshan weather” (Galerie Biedermann, April 2006).

31 I said this in my artist’s statement, ‘The Assigned Figure, or “existence is a curve” in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*.

32 Studio jottings, ‘Flashing Conviction, Summer 2004’ (6/08/04).

33 Yeats, ‘On the Symbolism of Poetry’. First quoted by me in a footnote in ‘The Greek Thing,’ and thereafter in my jottings.

34 Martin Herbert, ‘To See a Body Think: three essays on the work of Pina Bausch, Merce Cunningham and Karole Armitage’. *Modern Painters*, December 2006–January 2007, pp. 100–07.



into the wider setting of proportional action of all the powers in nature.<sup>35</sup>

Proportional action is at the core of my being; it determines all that I do. From my mind, where I experience proportion as numbers and rhythms, through my body onto the sheet, proportional beauty gets marked out. In this way I show that man can be measured, and that my measure is my reach as performed in real time.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-

\* \* \*

**Eight × 8 moves**  
*Winter 2006/Spring 2007*

“Where 1000 variations of three simple movements fill up the time between train and train.” Hugh Kenner, on Beckett.

And so it happened. On the 27th and 28th of February, while making prints at Pratt Editions, in Kent, three simple movements filled up my time between arrival and departure by train.

Down-up-turn, down-up-turn, repeated 8 times for each work. Once I’d succeeded with the special-edition print,<sup>36</sup> twenty further images followed, each the result of those ‘three simple movements’.

Out of twenty, eight were selected to become a portfolio, entitled *Eight Moves* (2007). And the form? It’s a vertical rectangle divided once down the centre. Or nearly: according to my intuitive self.

\* \* \*

**Spring 2007: A Sound Piece for Amina**  
*4 June 2007*

“Do start. By the sound of it.” – LK, *Jottings*

Drawing is “to follow the sound.”<sup>37</sup> Since August 2002 I became especially alert to the sounds of my drawing. I noticed that if I concentrate on them, I might better stay in pace and in place, and enter that trance-like state so crucial to the work.

35 These thoughts were distilled from ‘Renaissance Man’, a book review by Adam Gopnick, in *The New Yorker*, 17 January 2005, pp. 82–86. One of the books reviewed was by Martin Kemp, whose exhibition of Leonardo’s drawings at the V&A, September–December 2006, was very much in mind that autumn.  
36 This print is called *Eight Moves*. It accompanies the special edition of *Marks*, the artist’s book by Linda Karshan and Tamar Yoseloff, published by Pratt Contemporary Art, 2007.  
37 Linda Karshan, in conversation with Matthias Bärmann, in the catalogue to the exhibition, ‘August Form 2002’ at Galerie Werner Klein, Cologne, 2003.

These sounds are diverse: there’s the sound of the mark-making itself, both on the paper as well as on the table. (The rhythm is even punched into the air, though this is silent, except in my mind!)

Then there’s the sound of the paper swishing round, and the violent sound of those discarded works as they hit the studio floor.

Most important, though, are the sounds of my feet: there’s the foot-tapping as I stand ‘at the ready’ at my table, and the sound of me marching, or even shuffling around my studio, always to the beats in my head (and body). I can count on them – and I do: they insure that I ‘go on and get on,’ as directed.

This march/shuffle is absolutely QUAD-like: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-TURN. Repeat. Then, at the ‘appointed time,’ I’ll take up my position at the table.<sup>38</sup>

Here, the rhythms get worked out on the sheet, exactly as I experience them. In the past they were short, and percussive: it sounded like I was ‘beating the drums’. Now, the counts are longer-held, and so, too, are the lines that draw them out.

\* \* \*

**Finding the Centre: Dante, Beckett, and Michelangelo**  
*6 June 2007*

“I am as the centre of the circle, to which all parts of the circumference stand in equal relation; you, however, are not so.” Dante, *Vita Nuova* XII, lines 21–22

Thus Love, in the form of an angel, declares perfection to be his preserve, in the symbolic form of the compass. The poet, by contrast, must content himself with “circling round this place [the centre], whatever its shape and extent may be” (Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*).

Earlier in Beckett’s novel, the Unnamable had declared that he “likes to think he occupies the centre, but nothing could be less certain”. No. All he and the other mortals can be sure of is that “from centre to circumference... is a far cry, and [he] may well be situated between the two”.

A far cry, indeed. So far, in fact, that to get this measurement wrong spelled disaster for Michelangelo, in Rome. Now 81 years

38 This summer, 2007, I even positioned myself upon a square, QUAD-like rubber mat, so as to cushion my legs against the concrete floor. The tapping sounds produced here were very assertive.

old, he was called back to that city to rescue his three-part vault over St. Peter's. While he had made a model of the vault to ensure accuracy of construction, its completion was left to less remarkable artists, for whom Michelangelo's complex and intuitive design was "beyond belief".

"Instead of a vault with a single centre... There should have been a great number [of centres]. And the circles and squares that come in the middle of their deepest parts [the vaults] have to diminish and increase *in so many directions*, and to go to *so many points*, that it is difficult to find a true method."<sup>39</sup>

Michelangelo knew, as Peirce put it, that by "supposing the rigid exactitude of causation to yield... we gain room to insert mind [or intuition] into our scheme."<sup>40</sup> Rather than a *geometric* correctness, he sought an "overall harmony of grace...", one that even "nature might not present."<sup>41</sup> And so he recommended that the artist should have compasses in his eyes, not in his hands, because the hand executes, but *it is the eye which judges*.<sup>42</sup>

\* \* \*

Transcribed notes from  
Copenhagen, on *Slow Learner*  
21–26 June 2007

- 21/6/07

(2 QUADS KEPT)

Just moving the body through the plate. With attention. Locating the centre, or trying to.
- 22/6/07

(4 IMAGES KEPT)

Watching the proofing, and learning from it.

I    Line up the plate

II   Steady pressure

III Fluid movement over/through the plate

I tried to emulate these proofing PRINCIPLES, and then integrate them into my 'method'. (I have a 'method,' but NO PLAN!)

23/6/07

DAY OFF FOR NIELS. TO LOUISIANA
- 39 These comments are distilled from Vasari's 'Life of Michelangelo'.  
40 C. S. Peirce, "The Doctrine of Necessity Examined" (1892), in Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, eds., *The Essential Peirce* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 309.  
41 Vasari.  
42 Ibid.
- 66
- STUDIO JOTTINGS 2004–2017
- 24/6/07

(6 IMAGES KEPT)

So now I can move around my plate with a method, but no plan. 8 images (later edited to 6)

Fluid movement, gaining control of the process.

25/6/07

(14 IMAGES KEPT)

8 + 6 images. Real control now. *Slow Learner* (for the first time in print, the 4-part vertical form, and 8-part NEW FORM).

26/6/07

(6 IMAGES KEPT)

6 Winners. Good, steady line. Clean. On a clear day: 27–32 SLOW LEARNER.
- \* \* \*
- Summer 2007  
In the wake of  
Copenhagen<sup>43</sup>
- These drawings followed in the wake of Copenhagen. Making prints there, between 21–28 June, required endurance and concentration, in the extreme.

This I transported to Connecticut. In my summer studio, positioned upon a square rubber mat (an idea also 'lifted' from Copenhagen), I picked up where I had left off. And I kept in mind, too, the way I had integrated into my work on the copperplate exactly what I'd observed in the proofing: on paper, I continued to square up my body, and my sheet on the table; to keep consistent pressure on my graphite; and to roll through my sheet as smoothly as possible.<sup>44</sup>

So smooth had I become that the excellent alignment of these newest forms surprised me. Comparing them to my earlier 'figures' on view at the Tang Museum,<sup>45</sup> so charming with their exaggerated lean, I wondered at this difference of stance.

I soon recognised it to be – quite directly – a marking out of my change of stance: in Autumn 2005, in order to take my longer lines more gracefully through my sheet, I had opened up my posture at the table.<sup>46</sup> Since then, I stand with my right leg striding forward, and the left leg poised behind. Always upright
- 43 Between 21 and 28 June, 2007, I made 32 new dry-points in Copenhagen with Niels Borck-Jenser. The title of the suite is *SLOW LEARNER* and it is published by Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints, New York.  
43 See *SLOW LEARNER*, my text on this project.  
45 From 18 May to 12 August, my work featured in 'Alumni Invitational 2', Tang Museum, Skidmore College, Saratogo Springs, NY. This selection of drawings included work made between 1993 and 2005.  
46 See studio jotting, 'The New York Tour, Autumn 2005'.
- 67

and alert, I move more freely through the sheet, while drawing out these ever-straighter forms.

NOTE:  
There will, however, always be a lean to my figures. Guided only by natural forces, they cannot but follow “the path taken by the soul of [this] dancer.”<sup>47</sup>

\* \* \*

Summer 2007 Part II

Tommy writes that I’m a keen swimmer. Yes. I begin each day swimming in the pond – weightless, my body suspended in water. And as I navigate my way through the pond, always breaststroking, I count, and mark out, those same rhythms I’ll continue in the studio.

Swimming, I’d think about the symmetry of my body, and of the human skeleton. And I thought of Saul Bellow’s words: “the universe was inscribed into our very bones. That the human skeleton was itself a hieroglyph.”<sup>48</sup> Looking up the definition of hieroglyph, I was thrilled to learn that, coming from the Greek, HIERO means ‘sacred,’ while GLYPHEN means ‘to carve’. It’s a Greek Thing.<sup>49</sup>

\* \* \*

Slow Learner 1–32

“trial and error        we find the centre”<sup>50</sup>

My first concern in addressing these copper plates was to find the centre. Thinking of Beckett, and of Michelangelo, too, I used those ‘compasses in [my] eyes,’ as recommended.<sup>51</sup> I failed, of course, but next time failed better. And I thought of Eva Hesse, and “that certain pleasure of proving [myself] against perfection”.<sup>52</sup>

Most characteristic of this project, though, was the way I tried to integrate into my work on the plate exactly what I observed in the proofing: I thought that if I, too, could ‘square up’ my

47 Heinrich von Kleist, ‘On the Marionette Theatre’ (1810), translated by Idris Parry, in *Essays on Dolls* (London: Syrens, 1994). Also see Linda Karshan and Marilyn McCully in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, pp. 55–59.  
48 Saul Bellow, ‘Something To Remember Me By’, in *Collected Stories* (2001).  
49 Linda Karshan, ‘The Greek Thing’ in the exhibition ‘Constellation and Chance’, October 2004.  
50 Tamar Yoseloff, ‘Marks’, a poem based on the works of Linda Karshan. Published in the artist’s book, *Marks*, in collaboration with Linda Karshan (Pratt Editions, 2007), and in the author’s collection *Fetch* (London: Salt Publishing, 2007).  
51 Vasari’s ‘Life of Michelangelo’. Michelangelo said that one should have compasses in one’s eyes, not in one’s hands, because the hand executes but it is the eye which judges.  
52 Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: Da Capo, 1992), p. 142.

plate, and my body; if I could maintain consistent pressure on my graver; and if I could ‘roll’ through the plate with fluidity and ease, then not only would I get a good drawing/gravure, but there would be a nice integrity between the making and the production of the prints.

With my stance wide open now – right leg forward, the left leg poised behind – I hoped to add spring to my lines. Real control sets in only on the fourth day: thus the title of the suite *Slow Learner*.

\* \* \*

Matthias and the Meteorite

On the 7th of September, in time for my birthday, my meteorite landed in London: this was not by chance, but rather by design, as I had requested this present from Matthias.<sup>53</sup>

At his home in Bavaria I had admired Matthias’s meteorites, displayed among his other works of art. Most striking, at first, was the way their carved, grid-like structures related to their surroundings.

But it was their conditions of origin – the fact that they were formed under conditions of near-zero gravity, over time – that mattered most. And so I asked for one, thinking that by placing such a structure beside my prints and drawings at the Redfern, something really useful might be shown.

The visual connections could be seen at a glance: all these carved, grid-like surfaces were so similar.

What I hoped, though, was that the viewer might grab hold of their shared quality of weightlessness: for just as the meteorite had acquired its structure under conditions of near-zero gravity, over time, so my work aspires to these conditions.

\* \* \*

53 Matthias Bärmann, writer, curator, friend, collector of meteorites. At his home in Bavaria, I admired his ‘garden of meteorites,’ displayed among his other works of art (including three of my drawings). See his essay ‘Drawing, the embodiment of action’ in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, and his essay in the catalogue to the exhibition, ‘August Form 2002’ at Galerie Werner Klein, Cologne, 2003.

**The Vertical Grids,  
and Viviana**  
*Autumn 2007*

The dominant form of Autumn 2007 is the 4-part vertical grid. When most successful, it leans gently into the wind, so as to keep on going. And it brings to mind the processional friezes from ancient Greece, complete with the split down the middle.

Understanding my work as movement in time has lead naturally to the collaboration with Viviana. The connection between her classical dance and my work is fundamental. Both derive from those classical proportions which in turn find their origin in the body.

\* \* \*

**‘The Path taken by the soul  
of the dancer’<sup>54</sup>**  
*23 November 2007*

‘On the Marionette Theatre,’ a short story by Heinrich von Kleist (1810), has provided a valuable image for my work. Already in 1999 I refer to it, saying that, like a marionette, “I imagine myself suspended on a strong, hovering over my drawing as it emerges through transitional space”.<sup>55</sup> (The important thing is to never force my movements.)

Marilyn McCully, in her text within *Measure Without Measure*, suggests that von Kleist sees the marionette “as an allegory of man, controlled by the puppet-master but capable of movements and gestures that are unpredictable, apparently spontaneous, because the elements of control are sufficiently remote.”<sup>57</sup>

As understood by Viviana Durante, this image became the central figure for our collaboration. Viviana sees herself as the marionette, at first lifeless, crumpled on the floor of my studio. But upon hearing my Sounds – those rhythms and numbers that I count out on my table – she comes to life, stands, and takes up her position at the bar.<sup>57</sup> Then, in response to my rhythms – “Listen. Just listen.”<sup>58</sup> – she begins to perform her basic dance exercises.<sup>59</sup>

Gradually, having internalised my counts, she is able to step away from the bar. While free-standing, her movements are nonetheless guided by the puppet-master – a puppet-master who, of course, “also dances”.<sup>60</sup> And so, her movements may be

54 Heinrich von Kleist, ‘On the Marionette Theatre’.  
55 Karshan, ‘The Assigned Figure, or “existence is a curve”’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, p. 59.  
56 Marilyn McCully, ‘A Universe of Line’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, pp. 19–20.  
57 The bar should be read as the horizontal in my work, while the standing, moving figure of Viviana is the vertical.  
58 Studio jottings, *passim*.  
59 She will be marking out the forms of my work.  
60 Heinrich von Kleist, ‘On the Marionette Theatre’, p. 68.  
61 Ibid.

graceful, guided only by natural forces: they are nothing but “the path taken by the soul of the dancer”.<sup>61</sup>

\* \* \*

Developing our ideas, Viviana has suggested that mid-way in her performance she stops, steps quietly aside while continuing the simplest movements in place. I might then step out into the studio, and march out my ‘QUAD’ as I habitually do.<sup>62</sup>

She thinks that the piece should end by my exiting the studio: just as my counting stops, so too, do her movements. But like my drawings themselves, pinned ‘upright and alert’<sup>63</sup> on my studio wall, Viviana remains standing. To move again she must await the puppet-master.

\* \* \*

**Upright and Alert**  
*28 January 2008*

My body will be the measure and the meaning of this project.

From my proportions, and from my proportional action, all other measurements will derive.

My three drawings, Tom’s reflective piece, the radius from centre to circumference (of the circle within the square), and the overall height of the containing box – all these will reflect my natural reach.

The viewer will be confronted by my scale and uprightness and be moved, in turn, to ‘measure up’.

\* \* \*

The piece is comprised of three line drawings held within ‘Fecht’s glass’, a reflective piece by Tom (made of a mirrored surface, glass and light) and a suspended ceiling over the containing box. In this way all distracting shadows will be eliminated, while the natural light will give a sacred aura.

“Every dance in time has a sacred model. Look at the movements... of the stars.”<sup>64</sup>

\* \* \*

62 See Tom Fecht’s photo essay of Linda Karshan taken over a number of years from 2004 to 2009  
63 In studio jottings, and Jill Lloyd, in *Constellation and Chance*, catalogue to the exhibition ‘Constellation and Chance’ at the Redfern Gallery, London, 2004.

Equilibrium

Intrigued by the element of the time in her work, and by its performative nature, Tom Fecht embarked upon a photographic essay on the practice of Linda Karshan.

Seeing the result of that first session, Karshan opened up her stance, in order to gain spring and further grace in her ‘marks and moves’.<sup>65</sup>

In this way the collaboration developed: as Fecht came closer and closer to capturing this practice of repetition, concentration and balance, Karshan took evermore care that her posture, and the pace of her mark-making, be right.

“Dance is an action and a thing.” Charles Olson, in a letter to Merce Cunningham

\* \* \*

A Body in Motion is a Body in Thought<sup>66</sup>

Viviana is cut lose from her strings.

The image of the marionette,<sup>67</sup> guided by a puppet-master who also dances, has given way to a more dance-like approach: just as a choreographer will demonstrate the range and positions of movement to the dancer, my movements will be the template for Viviana.

Watching me work in the studio, and armed with drawings,<sup>68</sup> photographs, a sound recording of the work, as well as a short DVD of me at work, Viviana will be free to transform my choreography into a new piece of dance.

As filmed by the Ballet Boyz, expert in dance, film and choreography, Viviana’s dance, recorded directly in the studio, will prove the intrinsic connection between our work.

My drawings pinned to the studio wall,<sup>69</sup> always upright and alert, will add another level of meaning to this project.

\* \* \*

64 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).  
Quoted by Linda Karshan in artist’s statement in *Measure Without Measure*, pp. 55–59.  
65 Five sessions took place between Autumn 2005 and Spring 2008.  
66 See studio jotting, ‘Proportional beauty, and action, Autumn 2006’.  
67 See studio jotting, ‘The Path Taken by the Soul of the Dancer, 23 November 2007.’  
68 The drawings will have been selected by Viviana to ensure her connection to the work that might become a ‘floor plan’ for her piece.  
69 These drawings will also have been chosen by Viviana in consultation with LK.

Forms of Time

*Forms of Time*, filmed 7 March 2008 in the studio of Linda Karshan. The work was performed by Linda Karshan and Viviana Durante, and filmed by the Ballet Boyz, Michael Nunn and William Trevitt. It will have its first screening at the Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany, to coincide with ‘Zeichnung als Prozess, Aktuelle Positionen der Grafik’, 28/6–31/8/2008.

Forms of Time (A Body in Motion is a Body in Thought)

- I. The ‘stage is set’ by ‘Forms of Time, 2/8/07’, a suite of 9 drawings by Linda Karshan – variations of the classical forms/choreography that will underpin the piece. One drawing, ‘out of time’, dated 6/3/08, is positioned on the wall behind her table.  
Viviana is standing against the back wall of the studio, off-centre between 2 drawings, facing in. She waits, still. Karshan enters the studio, as ever, tapping out her rhythms on the wooden floor. This immediately establishes the rhythms – and sounds – of the piece. Viviana will be keeping the same time, in place.  
Karshan takes in the suite of drawings, marches round the studio, as ever, judging the work while responding to their rhythms. She pauses longest at ‘out of time, 6/3/08’, as she’ll be using this work to ‘begin again’.  
She puts on her working gloves, goes to fetch a clean sheet of drawing paper – always marching and counting out her rhythms – then places the sheet down on the table. She turns, and unpins 6/3/08, placing the obverse side upon the clean sheet. (This is her daily procedure.)  
She puts on her spectacles, carefully lines up the drawings, picks up her drawing pencil, and begins the counting, turning, sounding and intense concentration that is the work. Once this starts, Viviana ‘comes to life’, moving slowly to Karshan’s beats, connected as they are by ‘metaphorical strings’. (She is still, however, against the wall.)  
Once Karshan readies herself to draw on this backside (just making out the drawing overleaf), Viviana, too, is ready: stepping away from the wall, she moves forward, backward, forward, backward, in her balletic response to Karshan’s moves. (Her classical movements closely mirror those of Karshan’s work.) Viviana gradually reaches the ‘bar’, Karshan’s glass table, divided down the centre by a black line (drawn out by Karshan, according to her ‘procedure’).  
Viviana will perform her bar exercises, while Karshan draws out that first form. Once this is done, she’ll toss this top sheet onto the floor, where it makes a crashing sound. Hearing this, Viviana retreats to the back wall, and waits: she’s waiting for Karshan to ‘begin again’ on the clear sheet – picking up those traces, or not.



II. Now Karshan begins drawing out the real work – more slowly, more concentrated, and maybe even raising her pencil to an ‘en pointe’ position. Viviana will now be ‘en pointe’: she’ll move forward in a variety of movements, always with Karshan’s equilibrium in mind. And just as Karshan’s lines are precariously placed on the edge of the sheet, Viviana’s movements will show this ‘balancing act’. Her movements, too, will replicate Karshan’s “never occupying the centre”<sup>70</sup>: she will dance round her table/bar, just as Karshan marks her way round her page.

Once Karshan has completed the real work, she’ll remove her spectacles, eye the drawing, and pin this work to the wall. She’ll step back to inspect it, then walk further into the studio to judge it from afar.

Viviana will now move to the right, perpendicular wall, standing beside one of Karshan’s drawings. Here, her arm movements, in place, will mark out forms similar to ‘forms of time’.

Meanwhile, Karshan will, hopefully, be swaying in response to the good work – if all has gone well. If satisfied, she may now drop her concentration for the first time: her work is complete.

She’ll march rather quickly toward the studio door, remove her working gloves, pick up her keys and slam the door behind her. Viviana holds the position at the wall, still.

“Dance is an action and a thing.” Charles Olson, in a letter to Merce Cunningham

A FINAL NOTE

The film is uncut and unedited, an approach consistent with Karshan’s work – always completed in one go. It lasts 14 minutes, 26 seconds.

Two cameras were used, one turned on each performer, and crucially placed at right angles to each other along a track. This 90° angle, together with the strictly horizontal and vertical movements of the cameras, adds a further level of integrity to this 3-part collaboration.

A two-screen presentation will be used, either side by side, or in a corner, at right angles to each other (this will depend on the venue). In this way, the viewer will clearly see the connection between these two classical works.

\* \* \*

70 Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1966).

**Rockabye**<sup>71</sup>  
*April–May 2008*

The birth of Georgia<sup>72</sup>, and gently rocking her – to and fro, back and forth – confirmed the fundamental nature of my movements.

Involuntarily, with Georgia in my arms, I’d rock and count out the very same rhythms that have determined my work, for years now.

In old age, too, this rocking continues: “To and Fro, Back and Forth,” speaks the actor in Beckett’s play, *Rockaby*. And for me, as for Beckett, it is the Sound that matters: “The fall of feet. The sound of feet... The words are less important...”<sup>73</sup>

\* \* \*

**‘Breathturn’**<sup>74</sup>  
*3–16 June 2008*

“Who knows, perhaps poetry goes its way – the way of art – for the sake of just such a turn?”<sup>75</sup>

The ‘turn’ in the poetry of Paul Celan suggests some striking analogies to my practice.<sup>76</sup> (My ‘real’ turn occurred in 1994.) First, there is the pairing down of forms – from an earlier, surrealist imagery, towards the ‘SPINY’ poems of Celan’s later years.

These coincide, as in my practice, with a shift from horizontal to vertical axis (or from the landscape to the ‘portrait’ in my work). In this vertical stance, both oeuvres have marched along in series and, finally, in cycles.

Their earlier euphony has given way, too, to a sharper, more accurate expression. This expression is one that shows the GIVEN, and POSSIBLE. Always, of course, within reach.

\* \* \*

71 *Rockaby*, a short play by Samuel Beckett.

72 Georgia Karshan, born 30 March 2008.

73 Samuel Beckett, speaking of *Footfalls*, 24 June 1978. In *Conversations with and about Beckett* by Mel Gussow (New York: Grove Press, 1996).

74 Paul Celan, *Breathturn*, translated by Pierre Joris (Los Angeles: Sun and Moon Press, 1995).

75 Paul Celan, from the ‘Meridian’ speech delivered on the occasion of receiving the Georg Bücher Prize, Darmstadt, 22 October 1960.

76 Pierre Joris. Introduction to Paul Celan, *Breathturn*.

**The Arabesque, and  
Proportional Action**  
*Summer 2008*

“To perform *Quad*, it helps to be a dancer.” – Samuel Beckett

This summer’s marks and moves were more balletic than ever, due to the appearance of the Arabesque, from the very first days.

As if by necessity my left leg rose. I could now extend my reach over the table and, at the same time, ‘get out of my way’ as I drew my longest lines ‘straight’ through the sheet.

Unsteady, at first, perched on one leg, I soon gained control in this position. To draw out my shorter lines – ½ or ¼ measure – I’d need only to lift, en pointe, then lower myself, in proportion through these abbreviated counts.

I’d then ronde-des-jambes as I tapped my left leg back into ‘fourth’ position. And I continued to TAP-TAP-TAP as I readied myself to lift – once more – and begin again.

I was struck by my ability to ‘SPOT’ myself. I quickly found my new ‘centre’, and felt my weight shift – from my upper to my lower torso; this occurred mid-way through the line. And while my extended left leg acted *almost* like a lever, for me this was far from mechanical.

NOTE:  
For lines ½ or ¼ measure that fell away from me on the page (due to the TURN), I’d often lift into a part-Arabesque, before drawing them through, in proportion.

\* \* \*

**Proportional Action (cont.)**  
*Autumn 2008*

Leonardo was looking for VITAL FORM, and analogy. He was constantly searching for a UNIVERSAL SYSTEM OF PROPORTION that would explain the fundamental workings of forces.<sup>77</sup>

I note how my body will adjust itself – its reach, its lift, its shift of weight and its counts – in order to draw out my lines, in proportion, with maximum grace and economy.

\* \* \*

**The incremental lift**  
*December 2008*

Always in ARABESQUE, and as if by necessity, my left leg now lifts INCREMENTALLY; in time, and in measure with my right arm reaching out, both sides are increasingly in balance.

1-2-3-4: left and right co-ordinate their moves. And if an

77 Studio jotting, ‘Proportional beauty and action, Autumn 2006’.

arabesque is “nothing but a symbol of consciousness in its forward rush,”<sup>78</sup> my consciousness is winged by intuition, guided by ‘compasses in my eyes’ as I endeavour to find the centre of my line.

\* \* \*

**Physical Laws**  
*March 2009*

“These are not ritual rules, but physical laws.” Clark Coolidge, on *Quad*<sup>79</sup>

Physical laws according to Newton? Or are they something more mysterious? Perhaps they’re like the line of gravity itself, which is “nothing but the path taken by the soul of the dancer”.<sup>80</sup>

Every change of posture, which is always by necessity, directly marks its image on the sheet: still in Arabesque, I’m now more lifted than ever, as my right leg has risen en pointe.

Thus more elevated – my pencil point, too – I’d felt more in control of my lines. But no: while perhaps slightly less curved, and leaning just a little less, my dividing lines now came apart!

Alarming – surprising – and then I understood: from this lofty position, I had to swivel just a little, so as to reach the ‘centre’ of my form. Using those “compasses in my eyes”,<sup>81</sup> while I’d thought I’d found the middle, “nothing could [have been] less certain”.<sup>82</sup>

Now each vertical line falls just left – or right – of centre, depending on the turning of the sheet. And so I’m left with a split, which began as a wedge – something that surprised me not a little!

Soon my wedge ‘straightened up,’ becoming more like a zip, dividing my form top to bottom. The halves are in balance – in counterpoise, even; they look more plastic than ever before.

NOTE:  
The Russian dance critic, Akim Volynsky, has written that “balletic dance alone preserved the character of the Hellenic sense of plastic art”. And Balanchine said that “dance, ballet, is the legacy of classicism”.<sup>83</sup>

78 Akim Volynsky, *Ballet’s Magic Kingdom: Selected Writings on Dance in Russia, 1911–1925* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

79 Samuel Beckett: *Teleplays* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1988), p. 36.

80 Von Kleist, ‘On the Marionette Theatre’.

81 Michelangelo, in Vasari. See earlier studio jottings.

82 Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975).

83 Toni Bentley, ‘An impassioned hymn to the art of dance: a review of *Ballet’s Magic Kingdom*’, *The New York Times*, 22 January 2009.

**In Connecticut**  
*April–May 2009*

“Listen. Just listen.”<sup>84</sup>

‘Still in Arabesque,’ and still ‘risen en pointe,’ my left, supporting hand has lifted, too. More precarious now, but also freer, my body moves straighter through the sheet.

I’m more plastic, too, as I listen to my sounds in the silence of the Connecticut studio. With extreme concentration – held in place BY THE SOUND – I elaborated newly complex forms.<sup>85</sup>

But what distinguishes these works is their ‘breathing space,’ or ZIP – that space between each segment of the forms. And there’s (often) a point of light at the intersection of the lines, so precise has been the timing of these marks.

\* \* \*

**‘It’s all good’:<sup>86</sup>**  
**Copenhagen Prints**  
*19–24 June 2009*

While ‘still in Arabesque’ and still ‘risen en pointe,’ what claimed my attention was my DRYPOINT:<sup>87</sup> was it at 45° to the plate? Was the pressure on it constant? These were the challenges I faced.

Once enough mastery set it – after a day or two – my attention could shift to the forms. With no traces to guide me, as in the drawing, the sections refused to ‘line up’.

And so I failed a lot – and then failed better. But on the final day I started trusting time itself, and let the counting be the measure of the lines. In this way the sections fell into place, while a new sense of grace set in, too.

Sixty-three images were proofed. Thirty-eight were selected for editions, in two parts. But ‘it’s all good’.

\* \* \*

**The Turn-Out**  
*Summer 2009*

“To perform the Quad, it helps to be a dancer.” Samuel Beckett

Always ‘upright and alert,’ my body adjusts itself – as if by necessity – in pursuit of alignment, and of the perfect line.

84 Studio jottings, *passim*. All quotes are from LK.  
85 These recall the studio jotting ‘Two Clear Days, July–August 2006’, produced in the silence of this studio.  
86 Bob Dylan. The song was introduced to me by Niels Borch Jensen in the workshop.  
87 Drypoint: the name given to the sharp tool used to make this kind of intaglio print. Sometimes called an etching needle.

**Karshan Time, as recorded**  
**by Tom Fecht**  
*Basel, 4–6 October 2009*

So while ‘still in Arabesque,’ and still ‘risen en pointe,’ my feet have taken on the 3rd position.<sup>88</sup> More turned-out now, I lift higher from my centre, to better hold my balance through the line. (My upper torso has also opened up, in response to the turn-out down below.)

\* \* \*

Karshan Time is at the heart of this project. Its beats, determining her marks and moves, were recorded by Tom Fecht over three days:

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8– TURN  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8– TURN  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8– TURN  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8– TURN

4 × 8 counts performed IN THE ROUND; for Karshan there is the compulsion to turn. So standing ‘upright and alert’, with her graphite in hand, only the first of the sequences makes its mark (on the sheet on the wall).

The next 3 sequences are spatial, and captured by Tom on film. But as dusk set in, so as to still leave her mark, Karshan began ‘drawing’ with a torch.

These light drawings are beautiful – seductive – but more fascinating is their inverted form: here the line reverts to a greyish-black, while her moving body – as a ‘ghost’ remembered by the lens – can be discerned as the source of the line.

NOTES:  
1. This ghost-form brings to mind the Vitruvian Man: arms extended as it describes the circle, it clearly shows the measure of her reach.  
2. While the light at dusk is a greyish-blue, its complement, a rosy-pink, is the colour-cast in these inverted shots.

\* \* \*

**Extension**  
*Autumn 2009*

This autumn fewer drawings survived each day; one excellent one was enough. My concern, rather, was extension over the sheet: examining the summer’s work, the forms asked to be extended TOP to BOTTOM.

88 The third position in classical ballet. I’m beginning to think that classical ballet – its positions, movements and counts – is an archetype of man’s quest for alignment, and grace.

So I extended my reach over the sheet, so that the first mark hit higher on the page. Then ‘trusting time itself’ to be the measure of the line, the lines extended further down the sheet, while the forms now better held the page.

\* \* \*

*January–February 2010*

Going on, and getting on, with a new table top. Smoother, and a bit higher, I, too, lifted higher from my centre. Then, drawing smoothly through the sheet, the forms expanded, and contracted, as if by nature.

\* \* \*

*29 May 2010*

“A body in motion is a body in thought.” Mine tracks itself in time, and in space, as it marks out its image on the sheet.

Changes in these forms, over time, are the result of changes to my stance, my posture, and to the length of the TIME of the marks.

These changes occur naturally as I strive for better alignment of form and body, that is, beauty and grace in the work.

\* \* \*

**Tension and Alignment**  
*June 2010*

Concentrating on my right, ‘stable’ leg – the left, risen into arabesque, acts as a ‘lever’ drawing me down through the sheet – by tensing it, while risen en pointe, I’m prevented from sinking, or curving too much.

All lines are thus better aligned, and all ‘parallel’ spaces more consistent.

NOTE:  
“There’s a weight and a rhythm that I can only get if I’m allowed to conduct myself for a little while.” – Billie Whitelaw, on Beckett’s *Footfalls*

\* \* \*

**SPEED, and the Collaboration of Time**  
*Summer 2010*

There was a shift of choreography, with the consequent shift in the forms:

– It was a matter of speed. I needed to speed up the marking-out of those traces, and lines. It had come to feel tedious.

– So I ‘doubled-up’ the mark-making, horizontally and vertically, before each turn.

– Listening to the SOUND of this was crucial: it kept me in step, and in tune, with my inner sounds (my directions).

– In this way the PACE took hold, and swept me along. Following time, rather than the traces, a new form appeared. It remained, soon taking its place among the others.

It was a summer of exceptional presence, and Self-Unconsciousness. Is this the way we draw our own Self-Portrait?

\* \* \*

**Autumn Jotting 2010**

“Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on.”  
Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

– In balance, with my left arm extended, as part of the ‘balancing act’.

– While the ‘points of light’ at the intersections break apart, then come closer again. Expansion/contraction. Breathing in/ breathing out.

– So that the ‘virtual circles’ created bring to mind those ‘forms and light’ of other days. I have no regret.

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–  
1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–

\* \* \*

**From Matthias Bärmann, the Meteorite Hunter**  
*12 February 2011*

Dear Linda,

I expected to be able to come to Munich today but, alas, an absolutely unexpected heavenly event took place: Saturday, January 8th at 17:51, a large and bright fiery bolide crossed the dark sky over southern Germany, changing the night to a bright day for about 8 seconds (which is pretty long for a meteor), accompanied by a series of loud explosions (caused by supersonic flight and in-flight fragmentation). Two photos could be taken, one from northern Switzerland, the other from Austria.<sup>89</sup>

The mathematics specialists of the German meteorite forum started to calculate the trajectory, which took about 2–4 weeks (with all steps of improvement of their utmost difficult and complicated calculations). The result: the final point of the flight

89 See: [parhelia.de/storm/2011/flk\\_20110108\\_1651.jpg](http://parhelia.de/storm/2011/flk_20110108_1651.jpg)

should be close to Geislingen, Schwäbische Alb (about 40km south from Stuttgart), and it's highly probable that some cosmic matter reached the surface so that the meteor became a meteorite – it would be the first meteorite of Baden-Württemberg, an event of real historic significance.

As I live relatively close to the expected impact-region it was my task to contact the weather-radar stations and the seismographic stations to get more details for the calculations. I also had to make and stay in contact with the editorial offices of the regional newspapers to get reports from eye – and ear – witnesses and also to support the coordination of the research-teams. We already had some walks there, until now without success; it's not easy to find, maybe only a few fragments weighing an estimated 5 to 50gm on a surface of about 20km of fields, meadows and forest.

As most of our meteorite hunters (they come from Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Prague, etc.) are free only at weekends, I have to be there as well, today and tomorrow. It's a hard job, but it's great too. Active, and at the same time, very contemplative. And extremely dirty.

I wish the show the great success it deserves. I'll count my steps when doing the meteorite research and think of you and your drawing/walking the lines...

\* \* \*

**Free-Play, and the Indeterminate**  
*Winter 2011*

Tommy's book, *Vladimir Nabokov and the Art of Play*, arrived in the post.<sup>90</sup> I read it eagerly – the whole of it – but was particularly drawn to the first chapter on free-play and the philosophy of aesthetics, as defined by Kant, Schiller and Nietzsche. This is, to be sure, my 'territory'; I inhabit it everyday. Reading this chapter made me anxious that my work had become – perhaps – not as playful as it *must* be; I worried that it was too 'determined'.

I work, as I've written, 'with a method, but no plan'.<sup>91</sup> And if my 'method' is 'determined', it is so only by forces of nature: these are the internal numbers and rhythms that direct my movements. That said, 'there is always room for mind to enter into my scheme' – mind, by way of intuition, and judgement.<sup>92</sup>

90 Thomas Karshan, *Vladimir Nabokov and the Art of Play* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)  
91 Studio jottings, *passim*.  
92 *ibid*.

Still, I decided to go backwards to go forwards, or "*reculer pour mieux sauter*", as admonished Jung. So I returned to small, ruled paper from a notebook, and immediately – without missing a beat – re-found those earlier marks, moves and rhythms from 1994 to 1995, when my working method first appeared. Very quickly, after only 4 or 5 quick sketches, those 'forms and light of other days' reappeared. I had no regret.<sup>93</sup>

But they didn't last. My 'natural forces', as they exist now, soon gave rise to the forms of today: forms whose lines are longer, and slower, wherein the intersections don't quite meet. As determined as these lines may look, the start and stop of each one is intuitive; my intuition is exactitude, itself.

\* \* \*

**Friends of Eternity**  
*May/June 2011*

In *Time*, a collection of philosophical writings, edited with an introduction by Jonathan Westphal and Carl Levinson,<sup>94</sup> the authors suggest that certain of the selected philosophers are 'friends of eternity': these include Plato, Plotinus, St. Augustine and Mircea Eliade. Plato, Plotinus and Eliade have already figured in my studio 'jottings'; they are mentioned, too, by various authors in their essays on my work.<sup>95</sup>

Plato defines time as a "moving image of eternity", differing from eternity in virtue of its movement with the heavenly bodies circling through the sky, but time also resembles eternity because its movements are lawful, and unending.<sup>96</sup> Like the sun and the stars, my body moves through the sheet, marking out the same patterns, according to my numbers and rhythms.

Eliade said that archaic people were aware of two kinds of time: 'profane time', which is linear, and 'sacred time', in which the same event, such as a season or festival, is repeated.<sup>97</sup> My art manifests both of these 'times': my drawing-out of time shows its passage in a linear way – literally – as does the precision of the start-and-stop of each line. The results of this precision are those 'light-points' on the sheet, like a veritable constellation of stars.

93 Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*: "If you think of the forms and light of other days it is without regret".  
94 Jonathan Westphal and Carl Levinson, eds., *Time* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 1993).  
95 See Alexis Kirschbaum and Thomas Karshan, eds. *Linda Karshan: Essays & Poems on Her Work on the Occasion of Her 60th Birthday* (Marlborough: Libanus Press, 2007).  
96 Plato, *Timaeus*, in Westphal and Levinson, *Time*, pp. 52–54.  
97 See Westphal and Levinson, *Time*, p. xiii.



And each ‘event,’ or drawing, is a repetition of the same movements, in obedience to that ‘figure assigned to me’. Sacred, even, in that my movements are ‘lawful,’ though there is always room for *mind* in my scheme.<sup>98</sup>

Samuel Beckett, too, belongs in this group; writing about Beckett’s teleplay *Quad*, Clark Coolidge says “the Universe is stuck in motion, switch fused in the on-position”.<sup>99</sup> Beckett knew he had no choice but “to go on and get on”,<sup>100</sup> which he did, ever repeating his figure.

\* \* \*

**Artist’s Statement**  
*June 2011*

Since 1994, my art has been the marking out of time – those numbers and rhythms that I carry in my being. I mark them out as directly as possible, never impinging upon them as they come through ‘transitional space’.

No matter the size of the sheet, nor the material I use – be it paper, the copper-plate, the woodblock or even air<sup>101</sup> – my working method is the same: I turn my ‘support’ anti-clockwise, 90°, after each sequence of 2, 4, 8, or 16 counts. This is ‘the figure assigned to me’.<sup>102</sup>

Yet I have no ‘plan’. What has changed, over time, is the length of the line, as well as its alignment on the sheet. My earlier marks were shorter – even staccato – and leaned left, or right, of centre, as I did.

My recent lines are longer: they take more time to draw (or carve). Better aligned, too, as my body is more upright, their starts and stops are precision itself, leaving points of light, and time, on the sheet.

98 Linda Karshan, ‘The Assigned Figure, or “existence is a curve”’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*.  
99 Clark Coolidge, on *Quad*, in *Samuel Beckett: Teleplays*, Vancouver Art Gallery (1988): p. 36.  
100 Beckett, *The Unnamable*.  
101 ‘Light drawings,’ photographs of my drawing in space, holding a torch. Here I turned my entire body through 360° in 4 parts. I had no choice. Made in Basel, with Tom Fecht, 2009.  
102 Linda Karshan, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, p. 55.

**‘Complexity [came]  
Rushing Back’** <sup>103</sup>  
*Summer 2011*

London. Autumn, 2006: having completed a summer’s work dominated by the ORLO – “that extreme limit, or outline, of my pattern/figure/form”<sup>104</sup> – I spoke to a philosopher about this emptying out of the work. “Ah,” he said, “but complexity will come rushing back.”<sup>105</sup> And so it did, at the end of that summer.

These new, complex forms I called ‘Two Clear Days’, with a suite by Agnes Martin in mind.<sup>106</sup> They were new not only for their complexity, though; for the first time my horizontals and verticals refused to converge, leaving ‘points of light’, or ‘pops’, on the sheet.

Thus a field of light emerged in the work, seeming to light up each drawing from behind. But what these light-points marked out was precision, itself – the precise start-and-stop of each line, drawn to a beat, as directed by my numbers and rhythms.

This summer that field of light is evermore complex: the sections ‘asked’ to be divided, again, and again – as many as 64 sections per sheet. And as the sections are now divided by parallel lines (these emerged in 2009),<sup>107</sup> hundreds of light-points illuminate each work.

A note on chronology: the sequence of the drawings has meaning. Each day a new series unfolded, according to my intuitive sense. Work followed work as each drawing brought forth exactly what my intuitive sense aspired to receive.<sup>108</sup>

\* \* \*

**Time Shapes**

These new drawings require special conditions: they need time, concentration and poise.

While slower to mark-out than previous work, they are drawn, as ever, to a pace.

This ensures their plasticity.

\* \* \*

103 In conversation with David Wiggins, London, September 2006.  
104 Alberti, Leon Battista. ‘On the Treatise of Painting’. See studio jotting, ‘Selected Jottings and Reflections, January–June 2005’.  
105 In conversation with David Wiggins, London, September 2006.  
106 See studio jotting, ‘Two Clear Days, Summer 2006’.  
107 See studio jotting, ‘Physical Laws, March 2009’.  
108 My paraphrase of Schiller’s definition of the drive: “...will endeavour so as to receive as if it had brought forth, and so bring forth what the intuitive sense aspires to receive”.

**The Woodblock Prints**  
*Copenhagen, 22–26 June 2011*

1. Finding the centre (of the block).
2. Listening to the sounds (of the carving. This was recorded, for the Poet's use. See below).
3. Lifting from my centre (against gravity, and against the downward pressure needed to carve through the wood).
4. Keeping my tool 'en course' through the block, with as much rhythm, and pace, as possible.
5. "Every movement in the [print] studio must be graceful."<sup>109</sup>

After the second day of carving, and proofing, my 'light-points' appeared in the proofs. These points of light, at the intersection of the lines, mark the precise start-and-stop of the lines, drawn to a pace, and ensure the plasticity of form.

From the 42 proofed images, two groups were selected for editioning: 10 for Hein Elferink, and 7 for me, to be distributed among my dealers. Hein's group, printed in an edition of 12, will be accompanied by a new poem, 'Desire Paths', by Tamar Yoseloff. *Desire Paths* will be the name of a new edition, to be published by Hein Elferink Gallery in February 2012, in Staphorst, the Netherlands.

\* \* \*

**Picturing Movement**

"Dance is an action AND a thing." Charles Olson, in a letter to Merce Cunningham, 1952

Picturing that 'thing,' 'picturing movement,'<sup>110</sup> has engaged artists since classical times, at least. From the Greek vase paintings to Giotto and Leonardo's drawings of man at work; from Degas – and the photographers and cinematographers of modern times – to Samuel Beckett (in every form) and Bruce Nauman (the Beckett Walk), man has been recording himself in motion.

This is what my drawings do, though not by intention. Performative BY NATURE, my way of drawing has been the subject of film and photography. *Movements and their Images*, a 7-minute film by Candida Richardson (2009), captures my body in motion, as well as in thought, even as I rise into arabesque. Richardson was concerned to catch the concentration on my face; her film sees those conditions so necessary to my art: TIME, CONCENTRATION, and POISE.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>109</sup> See studio jotting, January 2005.

<sup>110</sup> Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar, *Degas and the Ballet, Picturing Movement, exhibition and catalogue* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011).

<sup>111</sup> See studio jotting, 'The Arabesque, and Proportional Action, Summer 2008'.

Poise is central to *Forms of Time*, a 15-minute film by the Ballet Boyz (2007): Viviana Durante, a classical dancer, performs her first abstract piece as I draw out my work, modelling her moves on my own. We are held together by the sounds of my work: the graphite drawing through the sheet, the swishing round of the page, and the tapping of my foot to 'Karshan Time'.<sup>112</sup>

'Karshan Time' is the subject of Tom Fecht's projects – photos taken between 2004 and 2009. He follows me from closed stance, moving lever-like through the sheet, to an open stance, for better alignment. (He also captures my movements forward and backward – or upwards and downwards – through the sheet.)

The Orlo



Photo Tom Fecht

<sup>112</sup> See studio jottings, 'The Path Taken by the Soul of the Dancer, 23 November 2007', 'The Vertical Grids, and Viviana Autumn 2007', and 'Forms of Time' (2008).

The final has me drawing in space, ultimately with a torch as we lose our natural light *overhead*. So upright and regular were my rotations ‘round my centre,’ the resulting ovals of light, called ‘the orlo,’<sup>113</sup> recall Leonardo’s Vitruvian Man – complete with ‘ghosted’ arms moving within.<sup>114</sup>

\* \* \*

**Light-Points**  
10 November 2011

These drawings require special conditions; they need time, concentration and poise. The points of light mark precision itself: the precise start-and-stop of each line, drawn to a pace, in a state of exceptional presence.

\* \* \*

**Light Points, and *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony***<sup>115</sup>  
February 2012

*The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, by Roberto Calasso. First published in 1988 in Italian and in English in 1993.

Born in Florence, Roberto Calasso lives in Milan, where he is the publisher of Adelphi Edizione. He is the author of *The Ruin of Kasch* and *Ka*. *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* was the winner of France’s prestigious Prix Européen de l’Essai Charles Veillon in 1991 and the Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger in 1992.

While this book is an extraordinarily imaginative, and masterly, retelling of classical myth, it is much, much more. As Simon Schama has written, it is to be read, and re-read, “as a story: one of the most extraordinary that has ever been written of the origins of Western self-consciousness.”

That is what I wish to highlight: the insights; the reflections of aesthetics, on perfection; on what Calasso calls ‘The Greek Thing’. In his words, this is “a certain spareness of expressions,’ or ‘the spare incision of a sign... that must be achieved by planing away and streamlining one’s material”. Such is my affinity to this thinking that I named a recent artist’s book *It’s a Greek Thing*.

But *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* is a story, and all the gods are present: “to invite the gods ruins our relationship with them but sets history in motion. A life in which the gods are not invited isn’t worth living. It would be quieter, but there wouldn’t be any stories. And you could suppose that these dangerous invitations were, in fact, contrived by the gods themselves, because the gods get bored with men who have no stories.”

113 See studio jotting, ‘The ORLO, Natural Forces, and Giving Up the Notion of Convergence, Summer 2005’.

114 See studio jottings, ‘The New York Tour, Autumn 2005’; ‘Equilibrium’ (2008); and ‘Karshan Time, as recorded by Tom Fecht, Basel, 4–6 October 2009’.

115 This text, in a slightly different version, was written to be presented at the Reading Group of the Reform Club, 13 March 2012. It brings together perfectly my current thinking, while at the same time, sheds its light on the recent work.

This is the story of the marriage of Cadmus and Harmony, in the context of all the classical myths. Necessarily, as the myths are “cohesive and interconnected, right up to the humblest variant”.

The story unfolds in a discursive way: in the first chapter, at least three paragraphs begin, “but how did it all begin?” And so a web of stories is announced. These are woven together until the end, when Cadmus founds his city, the city of Thebes, “where everything would be modelled on the geometry of the heavens”. More important than this, even, Cadmus brings Greece “gifts of the mind: vowels and consonants yoked together on tiny signs, ‘etched model of a silence that speaks’ – the alphabet.”

Thus the book ends, completing this story, while giving mankind all it needs to re-invent stories, without which the gods would be bored.

Here are just a few of the insights and reflections that intrude upon my thought, and my work, on a daily basis:

The first enemy of the aesthetic was meaning. The symbol appears as an image that is also something else. The aesthetic appears in a figure that is like many others.

The Greeks chose perfection as opposed to power. Power dreams of infinite expansion, perfection cannot. The perfect is only one of the innumerable points in the process that is ceaselessly transforming existence.

Perfection of any kind demands some kind of concealment. Without something hiding itself, or remaining hidden, there is no perfection. But how can the writer conceal the obviousness of a word and its figures of speak? With the light... to conceal with light: the Greek speciality.

Do my light points function in this way? Marking the precision of the start-and-stop of each line, I’d say they conceal, and CLARIFY, in the same breath.

\* \* \*

**In Connecticut**  
Spring 2012

The Light Points Disappear  
Structural changes occur. Twice

Extreme silence and concentration prevailed.

The light-points gave way to long, vertical columns, ‘marked’ by pairs of horizontal lines.

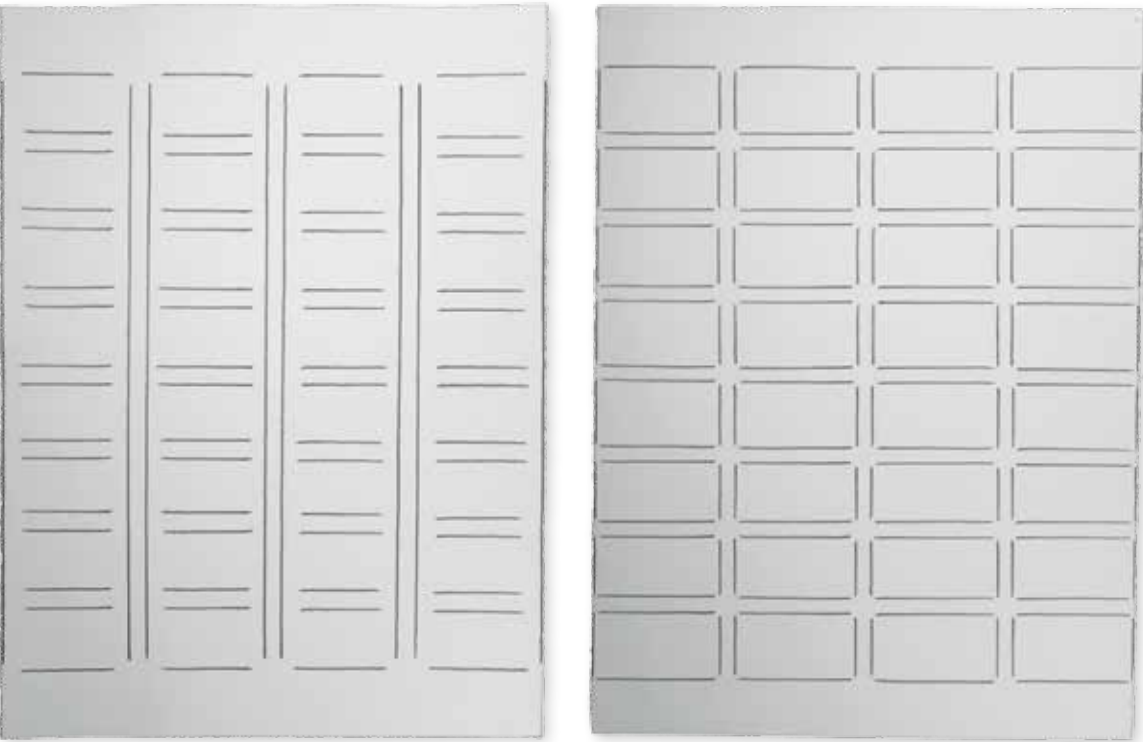
Both precise and intuitive, these lines became dashes: ‘jotting-like’, they looked suspended within their forms.

And, too, they stacked up unevenly – bringing a welcome curviness to the work. Sol LeWitt sprang to mind, and his late curves: but while his were ‘by design’, mine – assuredly – are not.

Then the columns gave way to lyrical grids, recalling those from 2005. But these current forms have found a new state-of-grace: drawn from an ‘elevated’ posture, in a near dream-like state, they felt effortless in their manu-facture.

“[where] the mind, liberated from the pressure of the will, is unfolded in symbols.” Yeats, on the meaning of rhythm.

\* \* \*



©Allison Wucher, Linda Karshan Studio

Left: 17/04/12 I, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm; right: 30/03/12 I, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

January to March 2013

“Always remember it is better to be rich and have good posture than it is to be poor, and slouch.” Roger Joseph, in a letter to his daughters (1966)

Good posture was a part of my upbringing; to be upright had a moral connotation, too.

My drawings are nothing if not organic. So my posture, and stance, has everything to do with how the form falls on the sheet, and its ‘uprightness’.

From 1994 to 2005, the work had a very distinctive lean. The LEAN not only characterised each drawing, but gave the oeuvre its overall coherence.

But then my stance opened up (2005); my left-leg rose into arabesque (2008); and I rose en pointe (2010) to gain extension on the sheet.

These changes in posture were by necessity, to get a straighter, more upright line. The isosceles triangle now, with its diagonal line, recalls the lean of earlier years.

That it came through the curve is significant: from GRID → CURVE (2012 → CURVE/GRID (2013) → ISOSCELES TRIANGLE (2013) → COLUMNS (2013) → BETTER TRIANGLES, via the CLOVER! (2013) All these forms mark out changes in movement, which IN TURN mark out ‘movements of the mind,’ or soul. These, of course, are Leonardo’s *moti dell’Animo*, which is the best way to understand these shifts.

NOTE:  
In February 2013, the curve reappeared upon the matrix of my ‘grid’. It was from these points of intersection that the lines of the triangle FELL: the perpendicular felt like a plumb-line, while the diagonal connected upper right and lower left corners, just as it was ordered to do.

\* \* \*

**Euclid**  
*Summer/Autumn 2013*

- I. The Euclidean constructions were an attempt to capture in PHYSICAL MOVEMENT a LOGICAL POWER of the MIND.
- This is what my forms do; this is what I do.
- II. “Let the following be postulated,” Euclid writes:
- (i) to DRAW a straight line from any point to any point  
(ii) to PRODUCE a finite straight line continuously in a straight line [in time]  
(iii) to DESCRIBE a circle with any centre and distance
- [I like to think I occupy the centre but nothing could be less certain. Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*]
- In the 19th and 20th centuries, mathematicians re-cast Euclid’s axioms as assertions of existence and uniqueness. The version of DRAWING, PRODUCING, and DESCRIBING is gone.
- Yet I draw; I produce; I describe.
- III. Euclidean geometries have traditionally explained the first three of Euclid’s axioms by reference to a STRAIGHT-EDGE, and a COMPASS.
- This is how my body OPERATES:  
TO DRAW  
TO PRODUCE  
TO DESCRIBE, IN TIME.
- In a state of exceptional presence.
- IV. The Arabs found that the name of Euclid, which they took to be compounded from UCLI (key) and DIS (measure), revealed the key of geometry.
- Posted on the door of the Greek philosophers:  
*Let no one come to our school who has not learned the elements of Euclid.*

\* \* \*

**Composite Jotting:**  
**Signs of Men**  
*Spring 2014 Part I*

According to Vitruvius, and to Cicero, too, the fourth-century Greek philosopher Aristippus found himself “shipwrecked and cast on the Rhodian shore”. He despaired.

He then happened to notice some geometrical figures scratched into the sand – triangles, perhaps, or circles, or lines suspended from points. He said to his companions, “We can hope for the best, for I see signs of men.”<sup>116</sup>

*On Magic*  
“In the earliest times, which were so susceptible to vague speculation and the inevitable ordering of the universe, there can have existed no division between the poetic and the prosaic. Everything must have been tinged with magic.”<sup>117</sup>

*The Truth of the Universe*  
““They told me that the truth of the universe was inscribed into our very bones. That the human skeleton was itself a hieroglyph. That everything we had ever known on earth was shown to us in the first days after death. That our experience of the world was desired by the cosmos, and needed by it for its own renewal.”<sup>118</sup>

\* \* \*

**Spring 2014 Part II**  
*late May 2014*

The diagonals became gentle curves, “swelling under the pressure of my weight.” The SPOKES entered the form while the GRID disappeared, emanating from the LENS of the work.

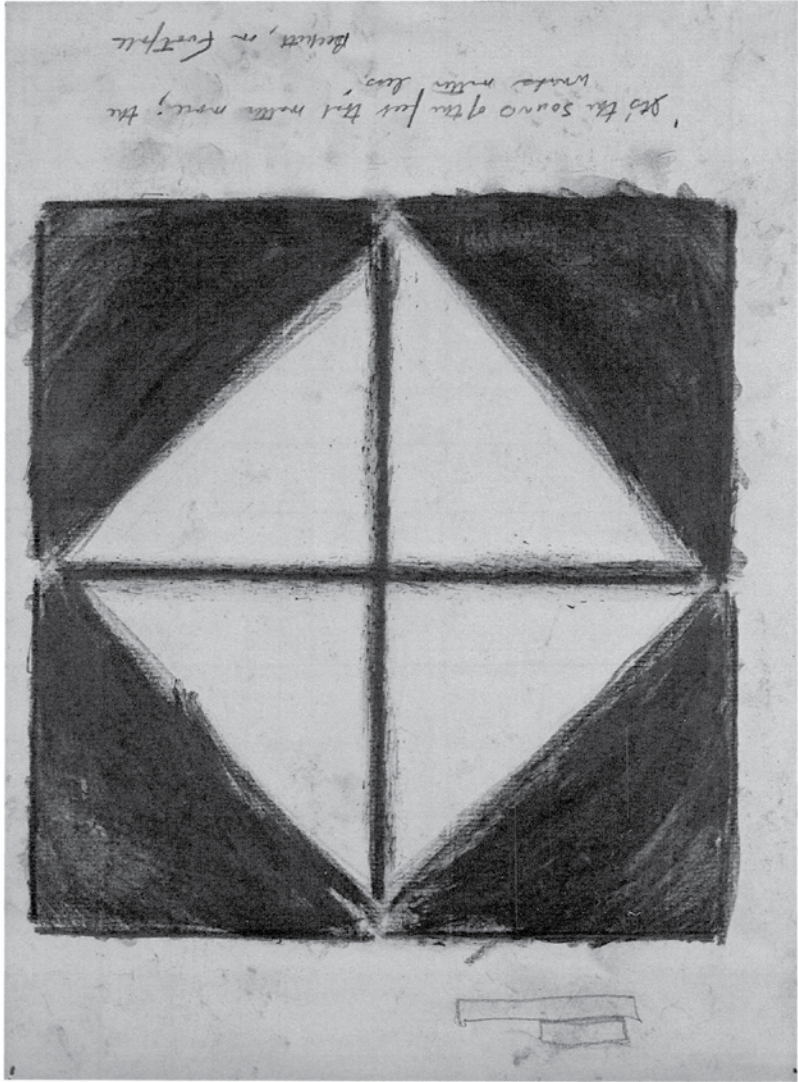
In drawing out the spokes, or HANDS, I turned the page anti-clockwise, as usual. But to draw out the curves, the page asked to be turned clockwise. This ‘mechanism’ of the drawing is like a time-piece, itself, and might even resemble a sundial

\* \* \*

<sup>116</sup> Vitruvius, *De Architectura*. Book VI.  
<sup>117</sup> From the prologue to Jorge Luis Borges, *The Gold of the Tigers: Selected Later Poems*, translated by Alastair Reid (New York: Dutton, 1977).  
<sup>118</sup> Saul Bellow, ‘Something To Remember Me By’, in *Collected Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).

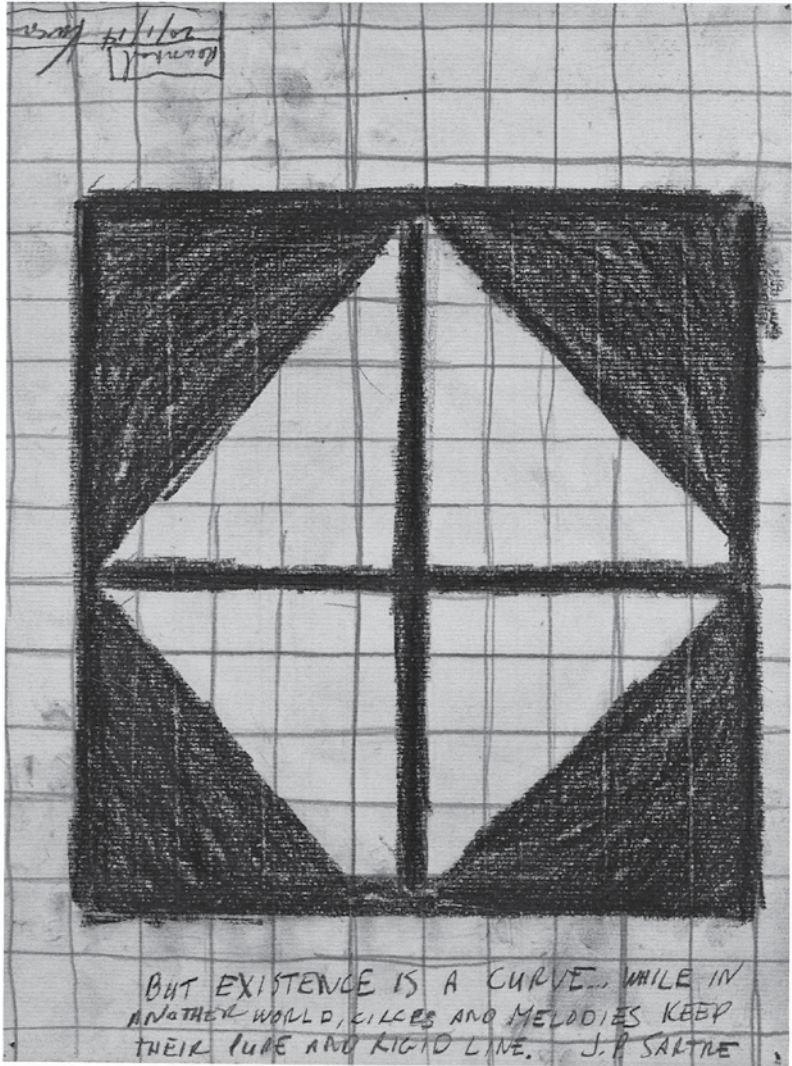


Double-sided Visual Jotting,  
Drawn in Urgency,  
of Necessity.



January 20, 2014 (verso), graphite stick and turpentine wash  
on reverse of grid drawing, 12.5 x 9.5 in.

“It is the sound of the feet that matter more;  
the words matter less”  
Samuel Beckett, *Footfalls*



January 20, 2014 (recto), graphite stick over pencil grid, 12.5 x 9.5 in.

“But existence is a curve...while in another world, circles  
and melodies keep their pure and rigid line”  
Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée*

Photos Rhannon Flemming

Flashing Conviction  
Spring Jotting 2014

“Arching, leaning, straining, swelling, breathing: the overall effect gives the [building] a special – and unsettling – quality of somehow being alive.”<sup>119</sup>

This description of the Parthenon by Daniel Mendelsohn, in his review of *The Parthenon Enigma* by Joan Breton Connelly, applies equally well to my drawings. While the ‘enigma’ of the title refers to the story of the frieze, it was the building’s architectural subtleties that captured my attention, and the effect they have on the viewer.

There are almost NO STRAIGHT LINES in the Parthenon: the entablature, and its platform, CURVE UPWARD; the metopes LEAN OUTWARD, while the dividing panels lean inward; the columns of the colonnade APPEAR TO BE STRAIGHT, but they actually SWELL AT THE CENTRE.

Crucially – as concerns my work – the ‘foundation’ of the structure TILTS UPWARDS at the west end, just as my drawings insist on doing.

This gives them their human appeal. Mendelsohn writes that while these architectural adjustments were meant to counter an optical illusion – and they do – this slight swelling conveys the subliminal impression of muscular effort, echoing the “deep breath of the athlete.”<sup>120</sup>

So it is with my work: the base of my drawings TILT UPWARDS at the left; their spines LEAN SLIGHTLY to the right. And my ‘un-straight’ lines<sup>121</sup> are ever-more curved, swelling under the pressure of my weight.

\* \* \*

Summer 2014, 10 years on

“Where 1000 variations of 3 simple movements [filled] up the time between train and train.” – Hugo Kenner on Beckett, 1961<sup>122</sup>

Here is Frank Kermode on Beckett: “Beckett’s character’s describe LINES and CURVES of relationships.”<sup>123</sup>

119 Daniel Mendelsohn, ‘Deep Frieze’, *The New Yorker*, 14 April 2014, pp. 34–39.

120 *ibid.*

121 Michael Harrison, “The curves of the earlier drawings are subsumed in those un-straight lines”, *Kettle’s Yard*.

122 Studio jotting, ‘Selected Jottings, Autumn 2004’.

123 *ibid.*

So do my ‘characters’ – those horizontal, vertical, diagonal and curved lines, which now configure in surprising, new ways.

Surprising, but also familiar: such is the way of the SYMBOL.

“The purpose of rhythm,” according to W. B. Yeats, “is to prolong the moment of contemplation, the moment when we are both asleep and awake... to keep us in that state of perhaps real trance in which the mind, liberated from the pressure of the will, is unfolded in symbols.”<sup>124</sup>

First in Copenhagen, making prints (June 2014); then in Connecticut, on paper in the summer, SYMBOL-like forms unfolded, one upon the other. I’d hit upon the technique of pouncing,<sup>125</sup> so as to keep my PACE, and PLACE on the plate: I drew my basic form onto paper, then punched holes at the intersections of the lines. With this template placed upon the copperplate, I pounced through the holes with a fine, felt-tip pen, depositing star-like points onto the ground.

In this way, the ‘pressure of the will’ lifted. Freely, and swiftly – without impingement – I moved up and down, left to right, diagonally across and curving through my stars, in a state of exceptional presence:

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9- swirl  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9- swirl

My ‘figure’ trans-figured into that of Beckett’s May, as she crosses the stage, up and back, in *Footfalls*.

The ninth count occurred as I re-hit the centre-point, at the START, and STOP, of every sequence.<sup>126</sup> Thus the Copenhagen prints are called *Footfalls*; that’s how they looked, felt, and SOUNDED TO ME. Back in Connecticut, on paper, my figure re-appeared:

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9- turn  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9- turn

where newer symbols proceeded to unfold.

\* \* \*

124 Studio jotting, ‘Particular Forms, Summer 2004’.

125 Pouncing: a Renaissance practice for transferring the drawing from a cartoon onto another support. Holes were ‘pounced’ through the outlines of the forms. Charcoal dust was then sprinkled through the holes, depositing star-like points onto the new ground.

126 Like Beckett’s *Unnamable*, “I [thought] I occupied the centre, but nothing could [have been] less certain.”



## Ruler and Compass Winter 2015

The art of geometric construction can be traced back to the widespread, possibly universal practice of marking out simple forms and measures on the earth.<sup>127</sup> These forms are what I called SIGNS OF MEN: “triangles, perhaps, or circles, or lines suspended from points”.<sup>128</sup>

Geometry means literally EARTH MEASURE. My geometry is the measure of my body and marking its measure on my ‘ground’.

“Man marks himself vertically; it’s the earth that turns. That’s how we get the cross; the grid. That’s why we draw the grid.”<sup>129</sup>

Plato stipulated the strict use of ruler and compass; the straight line and circle were his ideal forms.<sup>130</sup>

My ruler and compass are intrinsic to my being; my lines and arcs will emerge.

My arcs are usually a ¼-circle turn. To make a circle it’s a ¼-circle turn; ¼-circle turn; ¼-circle turn; ¼-circle turn.

Just as Alberti described.<sup>131</sup>

\* \* \*

“Do start. By the sound of it.”<sup>132</sup>

“Listening to the sound is a sculptural act. The ear is the genuine sense of sculpture.”<sup>133</sup>

‘Soundings’ is a suggested translation for ‘*Essais*’, Montaigne’s name for his collected thoughts. The word ‘essay’ hardly covers most of what Montaigne meant; according to him, he “set forth notions that [were] human and [his] own, simply as human notions considered in themselves... to be instructed, not to instruct”.<sup>134</sup>

It was in this spirit that we set about SOUNDINGS. To record the SOUNDS of my work – the drawing of the lines, the FOOTFALLS,

<sup>127</sup> Andrew Sutton, *Ruler & Compass: Practical Geometric Constructions* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

<sup>128</sup> Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, Book VI, in ‘Linda Karshan, Signs of Men’, exhibition at The Redfern Gallery, London, 2014.

<sup>129</sup> See studio jotting, ‘Flashing Conviction, Summer 2004’, 12/08/04.

<sup>130</sup> Andrew Sutton, *Ruler & Compass*.

<sup>131</sup> Studio jottings, *passim*.

<sup>132</sup> See studio jotting, ‘Selected Jottings, Autumn 2004’.

<sup>133</sup> Joseph Beuys.

<sup>134</sup> Montaigne. From Thomas Karshan, ‘What do they know?’, *The Times Literary Supplement* (22 March 2013) (see photograph on p. 99).

Thomas Karshan,  
‘What do they know?’,  
*The Times Literary Supplement*  
(22 March 2013)



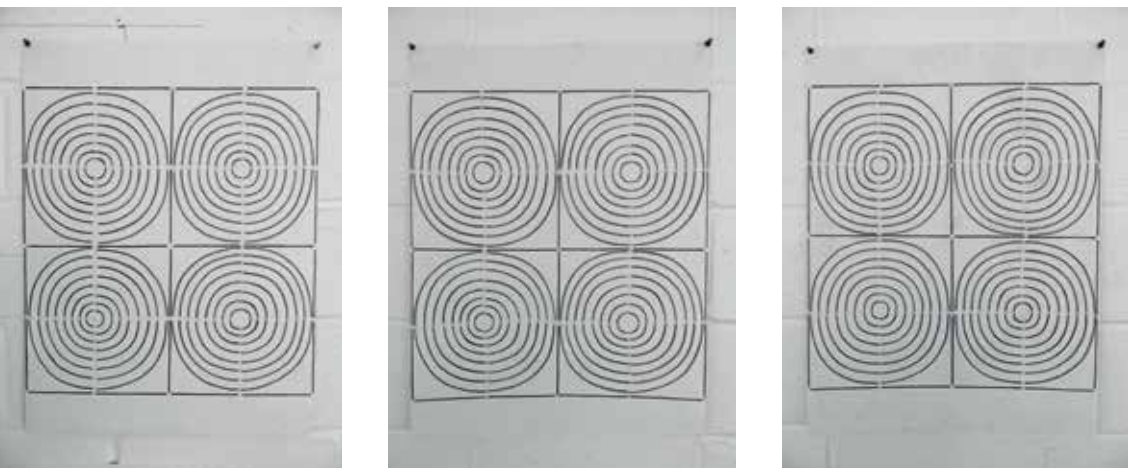
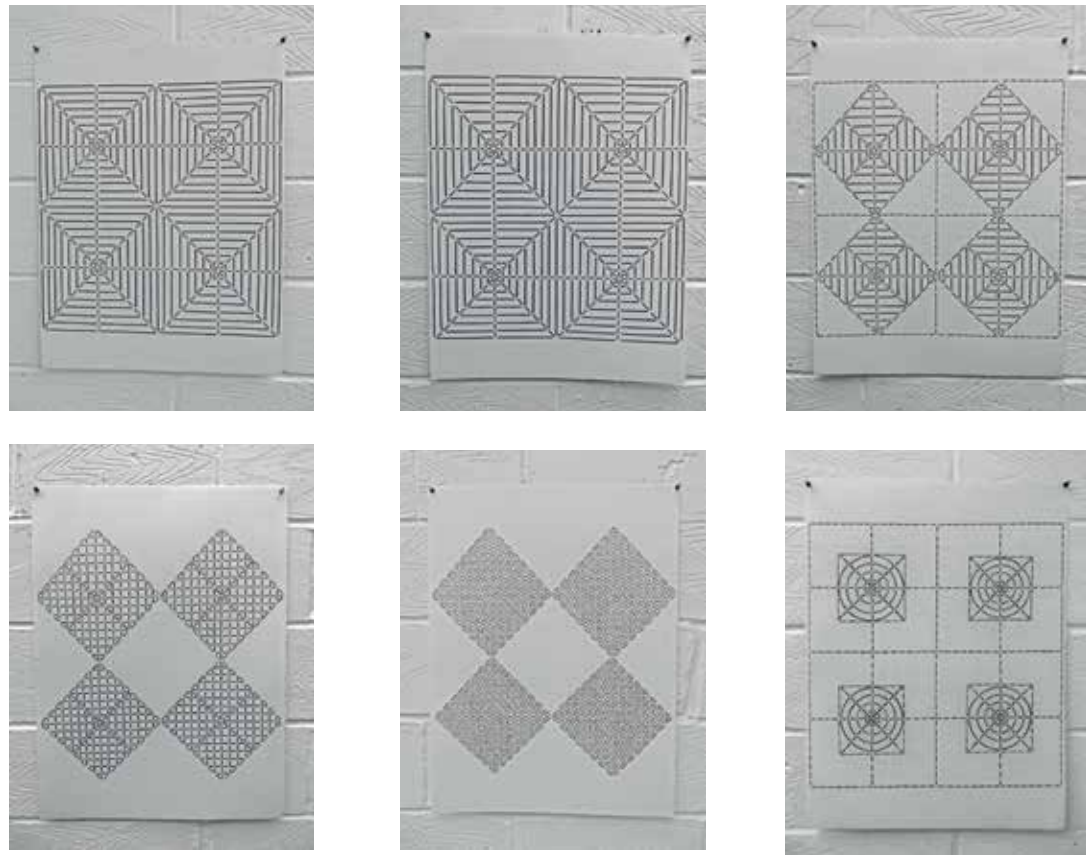
Helen Higgins

or FOOT-TAPPING; the SWISHING round of the paper and the SLAM of the studio door – these Sounds, taken together, are an account of the work.

I first paid attention to the sounds of my work in August 2002 (it was cooler; the fan was turned off. So I could listen, just listen...) I noticed that if I concentrated on them I could better stay in PACE and in PLACE – that ‘transitional space’ so crucial to my work.

It is here, and only here, that anything original gets made.<sup>135</sup> This is the guiding principal of my art.

<sup>135</sup> D. W. Winnacott. His theory of ‘transitional space’ is at the HEART of my work.



Studio Views, Soundings' drawings, and related works.  
Karshan Studio, Dulwich, London, 2015

Helen Higgins





Studio Views. Karshan Studio  
Dulwich, London, 2014.



*Above:* *Untitled*, 1998, India ink, 36.5 x 23 cm. Collection of the Artist.  
*Left:* *Untitled*, 1993, graphite and oil stick, turpentine wash with India ink, 32 x 27 cm. Collection Kupferstichkabinett SKD Dresden.

Helen Higgins



ON THIS DAY, 10 October 2014, the lines to be drawn were first very long, then shorter, then finally brief. These last were as if PUNCTUATED, drawn with vigour, and also great speed. Thus the variety of lines gave TEXTURE to the piece, combined with FOOTFALLS and the SLAM of the door.

.....

Six drawings resulted from SOUNDINGS. The first two were ‘preludes’; they established the GRID. Number 3 was The *one*, fully drawn on THE DAY, while the ‘stages were set’ for 4, 5 + 6. These last were fleshed out over four successive days, progressing, as they would, towards the ‘rounds’.

.....

The ‘rounds’ followed, as if by necessity; ¼ circle, turn; ¼ circle, turn; ¼ circle, turn; ¼ circle, turn: Four ¼-circle GROUPS; 8 arcs per quarter; 32 arcs per round.

Drawn ALWAYS to a beat with my intrinsic START and STOP, the GRID appeared, but now in ABSTENTIA.

So whether drawn as in SOUNDINGS, or NOT in the rounds, these drawings/groups cohere by virtue of the grid.

\* \* \*

**Soundings II**  
*March 2015*

The Acoustics of Sound / Meteorites:  
(what might Aristippus have thought?)<sup>136</sup>

German physician and musician, Ernst Chladni was first famous as the father of acoustics and sound, have proposed THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOUND into GEOMETRICAL STRUCTURES IN SAND. Soon thereafter, he wrote the first study about the origins of meteorites in space.

His thesis was resolutely attacked by Lichtenberg, Goethe and Alexander von Humbolt. But only a few years later, after the historical fall of L’Aigle, the meteorite that fell on France in 1803, it became clear he was absolutely right.

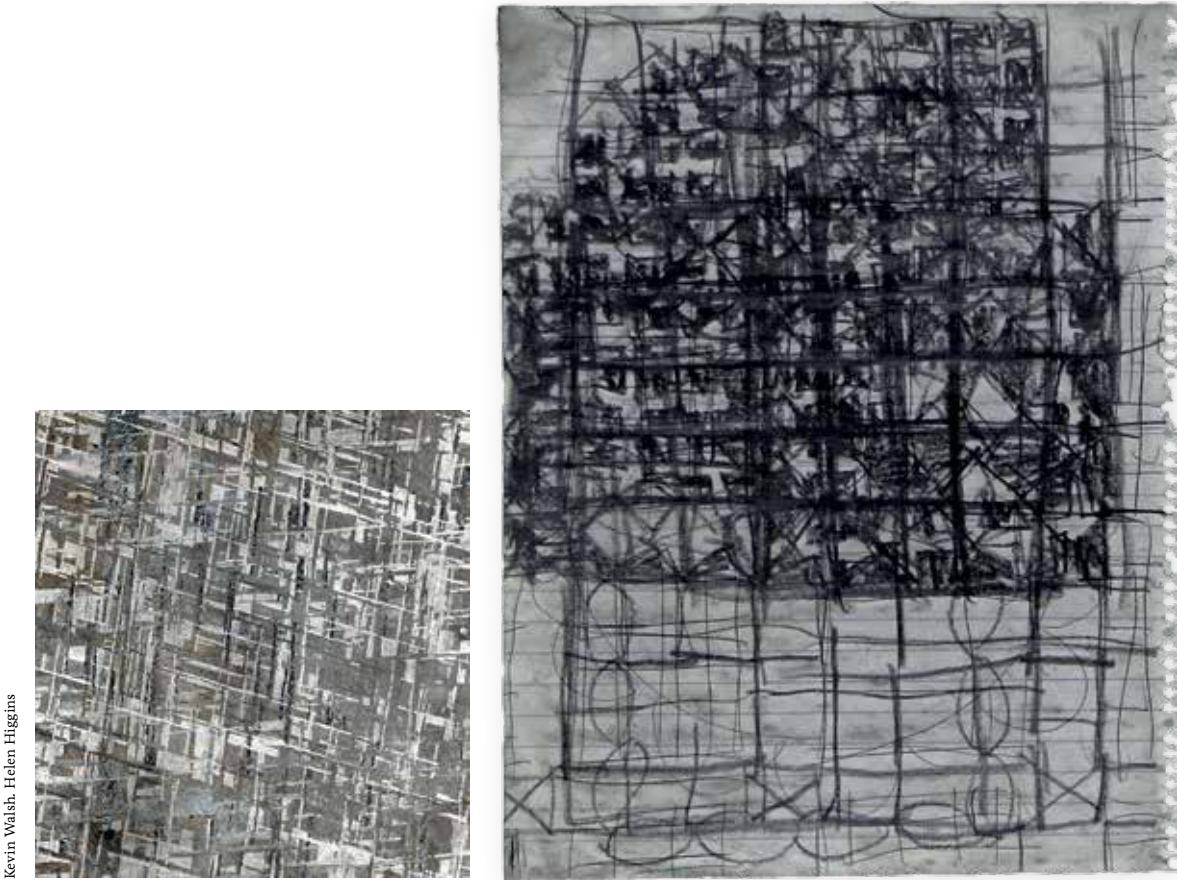
Chladni owned a piece of Toluca iron in his small collection; it greatly resembles my meteorite.<sup>137</sup>

Toluca iron meteorites were found in Xiquipilio, Mexico.  
The Indians of the region used fragments of these meteorites

<sup>136</sup> SIGNS OF MEN, Linda Karshan, The Redfern Gallery, January 2015.  
<sup>137</sup> My meteorite was a gift from Matthias Bärmann, as is this brilliant information.

for forging tools<sup>138</sup> – even before the Spanish conquistadors discovered them in 1776. The specific crystalline structures of iron meteorites depend on their chemical consistency and the process of cooling/crystallisation in space. And in time.

So we have different classifications and also different Widmanstätten patterns. Astonishingly – or not – Widmanstätten patterns look very like the ‘ruling patterns’ of my work.



Kevin Walsh, Helen Higgins

Left Widmanstätten patterns in the surface of an etched meteorite from the Gibeon cluster, Namibia (detail). Right Drawing on paper by LK, 1994, 27 x 20 cm

<sup>138</sup> Were these hand tools perhaps?

Spring 2015

Beams of light; Knowledge; Apollo’s Angels<sup>139</sup>

“We are in the midst of reality, responding with joy.” –  
Agnes Martin<sup>140</sup>

Martin goes on, referring to the light in her work: “It is cheering to see inanimate objects glow”. My light points became beams of light. They hovered above and below the horizon at first, then took their place on the verticals and diagonals.

Intensity of light depended on the cluster of the lines: the greater the number, the brighter the beam. Complexity and intensity developed as the drawings went on. Then at a stroke, it all fell away.

Open and free, the ‘grid’ of 1996 returned. Yet this grid had learned quite a lot, which one saw. Once seen, it was gone, opening the way once again, for the uplift and grace of ballet.

As W. R. Bion realised, “knowledge is not something you have, but connecting the links of what we learn to our experience”<sup>141</sup>  
As a ‘common reader’ and a common ‘knower’, this is what I do – going on and getting on, as ever.

\* \* \*

“What of the habit of the soul? Does not the soul acquire information and is it not preserved and made better through learning and practice which are motions, whereas through rest, which is want of practice and of study, it learns nothing and forgets what it has learned?”<sup>142</sup>

\* \* \*

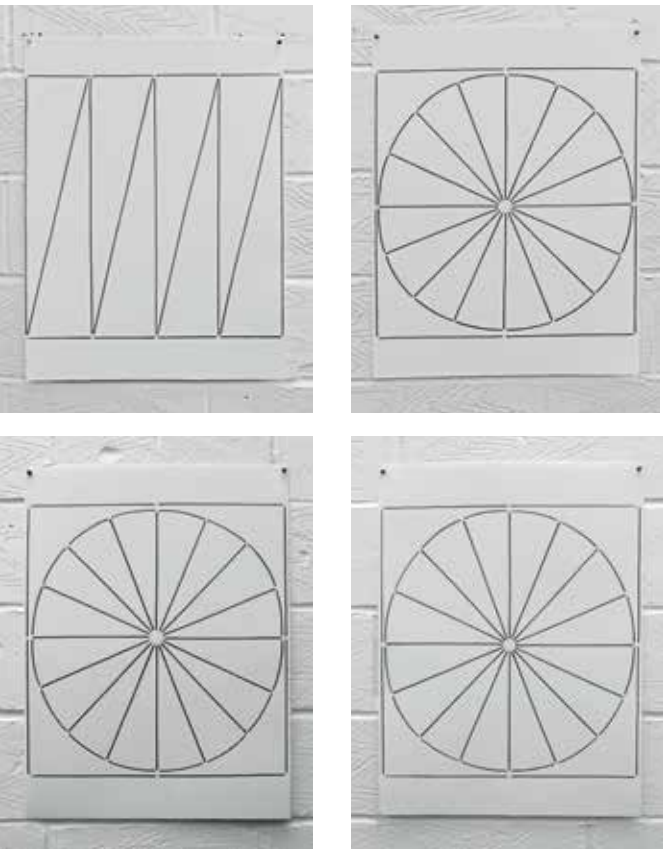
“If you think of the forms and light of other days, it is without regret.”<sup>143</sup>

\* \* \*

139 Jennifer Homans, *Apollo’s Angels: A History of Ballet* (New York: Random House, 2010)  
140 Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly, eds., *Agnes Martin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012)  
141 See Michael Parsons, *The Dove that Returns, The Dove that Vanishes: Paradox and Creativity in Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 67.  
142 Plato, *Theaetetus*.  
143 Beckett, *Molloy*.



Linda Karshan’s London Studio, June 2015.



Clockwise from top left:  
*Marching Triangles*, 2014;  
*Sundial I*, June 2015; *Sundial II*, June 2015; *Sundial III*, June 2015



Berlin/Dresden:  
10 grams

I: The Instrument



Harald Schlurteig

II: Linda in Balance



Kit Schulte

III: The Dresden Compass and other instruments



Photos Harald Schlurteig

Clockwise from top left:  
Punch with steel tip, interchangeable insert chisel and clamping screw, Germany, 17th century; compasses, Germany, c. 1580; compasses, Germany, c. 1580; square odometer by Christoph Schissler, Augsburg, c. 1575; cryptological dividers for encoding a letter, Joachim Deuerlin, Dresden, 1633

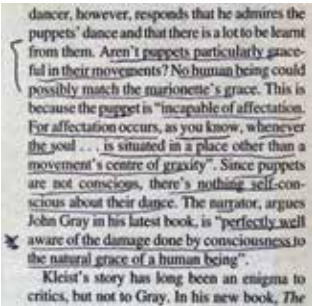
“To ascertain the correct time, by day or night, by the light of the Sun or the Moon.”<sup>144</sup>

\* \* \*

144 Michael Korey, *The Geometry of Power: Mathematical Instruments and Princely Mechanics*, 2007, Dresden, p. 31.

**The Logic of Body  
and Mind: No Strings  
Attached**<sup>145</sup>

Summer Jotting 2015



From Marina Gerner's review of John Gray's *The Soul of The Marionette*, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 31 July 2015

The Euclidean constructions were an attempt to capture in physical movement a logical power of the mind.<sup>146</sup>

“Her work is a choreography of the processes of life, going from the primary processes of the body to those of consciousness and mind.”<sup>147</sup>

My body triggers the process; my eye and mind track it on the sheet.

“There is always room for mind to enter into my scheme.”<sup>148</sup>

Off to a good start. “Complexity [came] rushing back.”<sup>149</sup>

From the sparsest of forms complexity came rushing back. Nothing could have been more logical.

I am both choreographer as well as performer. Like the marionette in ‘The Puppet Theatre’ by Heinrich von Kleist,<sup>150</sup> my limbs were governed only by natural forces, as far as might be.

With NO STRINGS ATTACHED, I lifted from my centre. It is gravity that takes the line through.

[My] line is nothing “but the path taken by the soul of the dancer.”<sup>151</sup>

“If knowledge is not something we have but the links between ourselves and all we know”<sup>152</sup>, might not expertise, similarly, be the links between ourselves and our total experience?

\* \* \*

**Sunday with Helen;  
Found Object**

13 September 2015

Found by Helen’s mum washed up on the beach at Middleton, West Sussex. Received with delight and gratitude. Best understood in view of *Linda Swim*, the short film of her customary morning swim in Connecticut as she prepares for her working day.

<sup>145</sup> See studio jotting, ‘Euclid, Summer/Autumn 2013’.  
<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*  
<sup>147</sup> Matthias Bärmann, in his essay in the catalogue to the exhibition, ‘August Form 2002’ at Galerie Werner Klein, Cologne, 2003.  
<sup>148</sup> Studio jottings, *passim*.  
<sup>149</sup> From a conversation with David Wiggins, 2006.  
<sup>150</sup> Review by Marina Gerner of John Gray’s *The Soul of The Marionette*, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 31 July 2015.  
<sup>151</sup> I refer to this text in my artist’s statement of 1999. See Karshan, ‘The Assigned Figure, or “existence is a curve”’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, pp. 55–59.  
<sup>152</sup> See studio jotting, ‘Spring 2015’, and Michael Parsons, *The Dove that Returns, The Dove that Vanishes*, p. 67.



Found stone object with markings like my drawings from Helen’s mother.



Still from *Linda Swim*, Summer 2015. Photograph Roger Karshan

\* \* \*

**Autumn Jotting 2015**

I. “Nobody dances simply for the sake of it. Linda Karshan’s sequence of apparent symmetry... are confirmed as SIGNALS that seduce the viewer precisely because of the defenselessness of their significance...”<sup>153</sup>

Therein lies their allure.

Their ‘significance’, and or meaning, can be seen as the sequence unfolds: one can SEE logic at ‘play’.

<sup>153</sup> Vicente Valero, ‘Movement and Origin’, in the catalogue to the exhibition of Linda Karshan’s drawings at IVAM, Valencia, 2002, p. 42.

It is an example of ‘purposiveness without purpose’.<sup>154</sup>

“Every dance in time has a sacred model. Look at the movement of the stars.”<sup>155</sup>

II. *On the drawings, as installed, 19/11/15:*

A ‘Dream Geometry’; the ‘Fairest Bond’<sup>156</sup>

“Line, circle and square are revealed as symbolic representations of states of awareness.”

Self-unconsciousness, in a state of exceptional presence.

“The fairest bond”, says Plato in his *Timaeus*, “is that which makes the most complete fusion of itself and the things that it combines.”<sup>157</sup>

This series might be called ‘The Fairest Bond Sequence’.

III. *More notes on sound: taken from ‘Le temps, lui, Time being’ by Anca Vasiliu, 2000*

‘Motion can be best read as Sounds,  
It’s enough to go through them and TURN THE PAGE  
at each half, at each quarter, each step...

Space measure absence, transparency, silence as the faintest of relics, it bears an indelible seal...’

IV. *Thinking of Leonardo and Piero della Francesca:*

“With Piero, proportion as a function of the spirit, with Leonardo of the intellect. Piero could not have drawn two lines without giving them some harmonious relationship, just as Leonardo was almost incapable of drawing a line which had not the quality of organic life.”<sup>158</sup>

This could not be better said. It is my hope to mark out my lines both in harmonious relationship, while – at the same time – giving them the quality of organic life.

\* \* \*

154 Vicente Valero, ‘Movement and Origin’, p. 42.  
155 Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Quoted by Linda Karshan in artist’s statement in *Measure Without Measure*, pp. 55–59.  
156 Studio jottings; triggered by Eliade.  
157 Vicente Valero, ‘Movement and Origin’, p. 42.  
158 Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci* (London: Penguin, 1993).

**Winter Jotting, New York:**  
**‘1 = 1’ by Anne Carson**  
*2015/2016*

“And then the (she searches for the right word) instruction of balancing along the water, the ten thousand adjustments of vivid action, the staining together of mind and time so that she is no longer miles and miles apart from her life, watching it differently unfold, but in it, as it, it. Not at all like meditation – an analogy often thoughtlessly deduced – but rather almost forensic, as an application of attention, while at the same time, to some degree, automatic. These modes do not exclude each other...”<sup>159</sup>

Thus Anne Carson, in her short story ‘1 = 1’, describes her “first entry into water”. She is setting out to swim. She goes on to say that she is “crossing the border of consciousness into, what?” (And she adds that “swimming instructs”. It does.)

Border: to cross over.<sup>160</sup>

The word ‘bardo’, the central concept of the Tibetan Book of the Dead, is formed from *bar* and *do*, the boundary stone between two things. It defines a transitory space, an intermediate space for the fluid processes of light and dark of separation and continuity.

For nearly twenty years I have prepared for a day’s work in the summer studio by swimming. The crossing from land to water is “as different from air is from stones.”<sup>161</sup> It is the breaststroke that carries me along, always counting my counts as I breathe and stroke to a rhythm. As I swim, aware of my spine – that central spine – I think of Bellow: “The truth of the universe is inscribed into our very bones. The human skeleton is itself a hieroglyph.”<sup>162</sup>

Hiero-glyph: a sacred carving, according to Webster’s dictionary.

I swim, I draw, I carve in a way that is both “forensic, as an application of attention... [and] automatic”. That’s the trick, yet it’s no trick at all.

An EVENT-SPACE that demands clear decisions which can be reached only from a condition of great awareness – forensic attention – and detachment – as if automatic. Which, once they are set free, happen by themselves.<sup>163</sup>

“Words Bounce.” Anne Carson<sup>164</sup>

\* \* \*

159 Anne Carson, ‘1 = 1’, *The New Yorker*, 8 January 2016, p. 64 (emphases are my own).  
160 Matthias Bärmann, ‘Drawing, the embodiment of action’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*.  
161 Anne Carson, ‘1 = 1’, p. 64.  
162 Saul Bellow, ‘Something To Remember Me By’, in *Collected Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 2001).  
163 Matthias Bärmann, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*, p. 9.  
164 Anne Carson, introduction to *Red Doc>* (New York: Knopf, 2013).

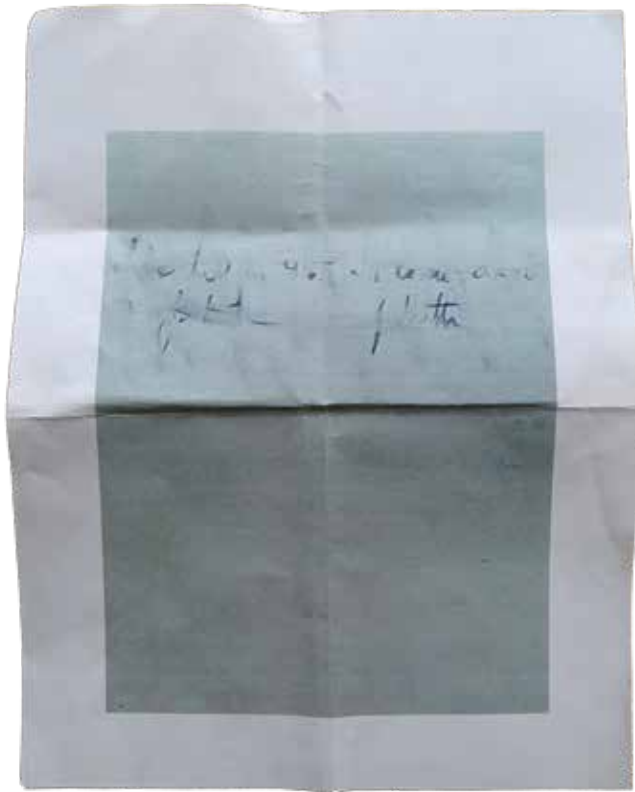


January–February 2016

- I. “These marks and moves have learned a lot.” Linda Karshan, *Two Clear Days*
- And they keep on learning, and proving, that “The truth of the universe is inscribed into our very bones. That the human skeleton is itself a hieroglyph”. Saul Bellow, ‘Something to Remember Me By’.
- That, and that the Elements of Euclid, as set out by him, are precisely what man is drawn to do, by necessity:
- (i) to draw a straight line from any point to any point
  - (ii) to produce a finite straight line continuously in a straight line [in time]
  - (iii) to describe a circle with any centre and distance
- This is what I naturally do, with ‘forensic attention’, always upright and alert.
- In this way the marks – and – moves are automatic.
- II. Reaching out; squaring up...  
So that the diagonals will intersect.
- A sense of physicality in the extreme:  
Breathing in and out; a steady overall rhythm.  
And getting the proportions RIGHT. Again, again, and again.
- III. Pace and Place
- Becoming evermore alert to PACE, in life as in art, so as to be increasingly present in PLACE.
- Unless that place is transitional space; here, one’s sense of place is precarious, in the extreme. And precarious, too, by necessity: “it is here and only here, that anything original gets made” (D. W. Winnicott).

\* \* \*

**Correspondence with  
Anne Carson**  
21 April 2016



Courtesy Anne Carson. Photo Helen Higgins

Manuscript page  
by Anne Carson

*A letter to Anne Carson,  
concerning her manuscript  
page/drawing*

Dear Anne Carson,

I am writing to you on the recommendation of Bernard, to ‘wonder aloud’ with you about the beautiful ‘drawing’ – which is how I read it – that was so intelligently reproduced on the verso of your CV handout last Monday night, at the Y.

I was mesmerized and moved by your performance/talk; it was one of the very best performances of any kind that I have seen. And I have seen/listened to many.

Once home, still under your spell, I happened to turn the sheet and found this magical page.

LK

thank you for your letter. I confess I did not think of that erased page as an artwork, just a disguise. and although I do a lot of drawing and fiddling around in spare time, my work is not showable except to tolerant friends, in my opinion.

*From Anne Carson to Linda  
Karshan, 21 April 2016*

From Linda Karshan to Anne Carson, 19 May 2016

Dear Anne,

Back in London, ‘crossing over’ to my life and work here, I happily – even ‘significantly?’ – re-found that copy of *The New Yorker* wherein sits your essay, ‘1=1’. Heavily annotated, with my ‘studio jotting’, in response, tucked between the pages, permit me to single out a few key phrases. In this way I might communicate, without too many words, those areas where our concerns intersect, and even cross over.

Swimming; to cross over. ‘Crossing the border of consciousness into, into what?’ Into transitional space, perhaps, as defined by Donald Winnicott? This is the creative space I inhabit in my work, by design. No; NOT meditation, to be sure. *Au contraire*. Like you, I know from nearly 35 years experience of *attention and commitment* to transitional space, that it is both forensic and automatic, in the same breath.

Breath; that, too. My drawing is marked out in obedience to ‘that moving figure assigned to me’. It consists of an internal ‘system’ of numbers and rhythms – a given/gift, but at the same time an archetype of time, itself. Breathing in; breathing out. Like swimming; I know that swimming instructs.

\* \* \*



Linda Karshan, *Visual Poem*, 1998. Collection Die Lyrik Kabinett, Munich

Helen Higgins

**Under-represented Artists; Women**

**Two novels in verse by a woman poet/classicist/translator and essayist**  
*Book review by Linda Karshan, May 2016*

*Autobiography of Red*, a novel in verse, and its sequel, *Red Doc* >, by Anne Carson

It occasionally happens that the most original works of art are transformations of earlier found objects. One saw this with exceptional clarity in New York last month, in the exhibition of sculpture by Picasso at The Museum of Modern Art.

*Autobiography of Red* and *Red Doc* > by Anne Carson, are stunning examples of this transformation in literature. Both are masterpieces dating from 1998 and 2013 respectively. They are a brilliant retelling of the GERONIDES, a classical myth of Herakles and Geryon, according to Stesichorus.

Anne Carson, a professor of classics as well as a poet, essayist and translator, with a background in classical language, comparative literature, anthropology, history and commercial art, is uniquely well placed to take on the challenge. Beginning with the remaining scraps left to us by Stesichorus, she not only recreates this ancient myth, but reinvents a genre. Both books are novels as well as poems; *Autobiography of Red* transforms an ancient myth into a wholly original coming-of-age story set in the present. In her prelude to *Autobiography of Red*, she tells us that Stesichorus came after Homer and before Gertrude Stein – a difficult interval for a poet. Born about 650 BC on the North coast of Sicily in a city called Himera he lived among refugees who spoke a mixed dialect of Chalcidian and Doric. A refugee population is hungry for language and aware that anything can happen. “Words bounce. Words, if you let them, will do what they want to and what they have to do.”

And that is how Anne Carson writes. Words bounce. Indeed that is the impression the reader has, especially when reading *Red Doc* >, the sequel to *Autobiography of Red*.

“Some years ago I wrote a book about a boy named Geryon who was red and had wings and fell in love with Herakles. Recently I began to wonder what happened to them in later life. *Red Doc* > continues their adventures in a very different style and with changed names.

To live past the end of your myth is a perilous thing”.

To read *Red Doc* >, in particular is a perilous thing, while *Autobiography of Red* is just possible to follow:

Geryon, a young boy who is also a winged red monster, reveals the volcanic terrain of his fragile tormented soul in an autobiography he begins at the age of five. As he grows older, Geryon escapes his abusive brother and affectionate but ineffectual mother, finding solace behind the lens of his camera and in the arms of a young man named Herakles. In Carson’s telling, Herakles is a cavalier drifter who leaves Geryon at the peak of infatuation. When Herakles reappears years later, Geryon confronts again the pain of his desire and embarks on a journey that will unleash his creative imagination to the fullest extent.

Carson follows him on this journey. But, as she has warned, it is perilous to live beyond your myth. Indeed it’s hard to know exactly where one is in reading this work of complex structure. I had the sense that one was amongst veterans of Vietnam, damaged both physically and psychologically. At the same time, one is travelling in the area of Italy known as Ercolano, where the volcanoes remain active and a threat. As I have said, the names have been changed; the nature of the characters have, too. The mother, however, is ever present, as mothers tend to be. To conclude, this from *Red Doc*>:

Mothers as ice  
Or when they are nice  
No one more nice in Spring

Mothers ashamed and Ablaze and clear  
At the end  
As they are  
As they almost all are, and then  
Mothers don’t come around Again  
In spring <sup>165</sup>

Read these books at your peril. As with high art, I recommend immersing yourself in the spirit of the thing, rather than trying to unpack it.

Reading Group, Reform Club, London

\* \* \*

165 Anne Carson, *Red Doc*>, excerpt from *Wife of Brain*, p. 162.

Spring Jotting 2016  
Part I

Out and about in NYC; upright and alert.

A) Anne Carson: Words Bounce.

They did in her reading of ‘Threat’, an essay in three parts, performed at the 92nd Street Y (11 April 2016). It helped that she was an artist. She began as a visual artist but the titles of the drawings kept getting longer and longer.

B) Samuel Beckett: “to perform quad it helps to be a dancer”<sup>166</sup>

To perform *Footfalls* it helped to be a dancer. Lisa Dwan, as May, performing *Footfalls* at the Skirball Center NYU, 17 April 2016.

1–2–3–4–5–6–7–8–9 WHEEL

‘WHEEL’, not TWIRL.  
These are the true Footfalls.

C) Merce Cunningham

To dance Merce, it is the movement that counts, reaching out in the extreme; the shapes will follow (*Fabrications*, the 92nd Street Y, 1 April 2016).

This thought shaped my approach to *Glint I–VII*. See *Glint Jotting* to follow.

D) And Tap...

On the history of Tap, Brian Seibert at 92nd Street Y, 15 April 2016:

“Practice is the art of every dancer.”  
“Steely steps.”  
“Your body does what it allows you to do.”  
“Rehearsed spontaneity; Musical logic.”  
“Practice.”

\* \* \*

166 Studio jottings on Beckett, *passim*.

Spring Jotting 2016  
Part II

GLINT I–VII

Seven dry point etchings. Carved and printed in New York City in collaboration with Greg Burnet, 4–7 April 2016.

“Thinking is an action, a movement of the mind and soul made visible by pose and expression.”<sup>167</sup>

The glow of the copper plate dazzled my eyes as it emerged with the lifting of the ground. I followed it; I tracked it as I carved each line, once, twice, thrice and a fourth time, incising myself in each stroke.

I thought of the Greek artist Apelles. The Elder Pliny recounts that in the fourth century BC Apelles was acclaimed for the DORIC THOROUGHNESS and IONIC GRACE of his art. Competitive in the pursuit of excellence, he engaged in a competition with Protogenes, to prove who could draw the finest line.<sup>168</sup>

Apelles went first; Protogenes followed, believing he’d bettered his rival. Apelles returned to the scene of the crime perfectly bisecting the lines.

“Tell them Apelles was here”, he declared. “I did this”.<sup>169</sup>

Once, twice, thrice, four times: each stroke bisecting the line. Following the glint, each line grew deeper while the sound grew grittier still.

“Follow the sound”;<sup>170</sup> track the glint: this held me in pace and in place. Seven ‘figures’ emerged, upright and alert. It’s a Greek Thing.

\* \* \*

Spring Jotting  
Part III  
2 May 2016

Yesterday I scumbled, without colour.

I intend to scumble my copper plate in Dresden.

\* \* \*

<sup>167</sup> A description of Dante and Beatrice in Botticelli’s drawing for Canto II of the *Paradiso*. In Andrew Butterfield, ‘Botticelli: Love, Wisdom, Terror’, *New York Review of Books*, 26 May 2016.

<sup>168</sup> The Ancient Greeks, over place and over time, possessed a range of talents and resources. I share at least two of them: their obsessive competitiveness, which they linked to their pursuit of excellence or arete.

<sup>169</sup> Pliny the Elder, so the saying goes.

<sup>170</sup> Studio jottings, *passim*.

Summer Jotting 2016

- I. The right proportion of the enclosing form, drawn IN THE MANNER OF NATURE.
- II. “The fairest bond”, says Plato in the *Timaeus*, ‘is that which makes the most perfect fusion of itself and the things that it combines’.<sup>171</sup>
- III. Only the right proportion of the enclosing form, drawn out in the manner of nature, would allow all the lines – horizontal, vertical, diagonal or curved – to intersect GRACEFULLY at the right spot. (All true grace is economical).<sup>172</sup>
- IV. Dark points prevailed: the light-points; or ‘chinks between the lines’ gave way to continuous intersecting lines. The dark intersections glowed.
- V. “It is thrilling to see inanimate objects glow.”<sup>173</sup>

.....

Several repetitions of the same form also characterized the summer’s work. Everything in proportion, even more so.

\* \* \*

Elective Affinities  
06.10.2016

The composite picture taken last week, is worth many words. I’ll be brief..

- Beginning with Plato, for whom Time was a moving image of eternity.<sup>174</sup>
- Turn and turn about, according to Beckett, as Molloy rotates and sucks his sixteen sucking stones, with method but with no plan. “But to suck the stones as I have described, not haphazard, but with method, was also I think a bodily need.”<sup>175</sup>
- “One cannot speak about the work of Linda Karshan without talking about its making. It is a ‘choreography of the processes of life, going from the primary processes of body, to those of consciousness and mind.”<sup>176</sup>

<sup>171</sup> See studio jotting, ‘Autumn Jotting 2015’. Also published in Vicente Valero, ‘Movement and Origin’, in the catalogue to the exhibition of Linda Karshan’s drawings at IVAM, Valencia, 2002, p. 42.

<sup>172</sup> Samuel Beckett, as quoted in Mel Gussow, *Conversations with and about Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 1996) (and studio jottings, ‘Selected Autumn Jottings’, 2004).

<sup>173</sup> F. Morris and T. Bell, *Agnes Martin*, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Publishing, 2015).

<sup>174</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*. See ‘The Assigned Figure, or “existence is a curve”’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*.

<sup>175</sup> Samuel Beckett, *Molloy* and studio jottings, *passim*.

<sup>176</sup> Matthias Bärmann, in his essay in the catalogue to the exhibition ‘August Form 2002’ at Galerie Werner Klein, Cologne, 2003.

There is always room ‘to insert mind into our scheme’, as C. S. Peirce describes it in ‘The Doctrine of Necessity Examined’. With my mind in the position to which it is entitled, as ‘the soul self-intelligible thing’ – that is the fountain of existence’ – I solve the problem of the connection of soul and body.<sup>177</sup>



Stills from *Linda Karshan: Choreographic Aspect* (2015), a film by Ishmael Annobil

- Bruce Nauman embodies this connection in his recent work *Contrapposto Studies, I through VII*, 2015/2016. In this multi-part video and sound work that ‘unites a late-career classicism with a mortal ferocity that demands attention... Nauman picks up a theme from 1968, his handmade video entitled *Walk With Contrapposto*.<sup>178</sup> The pose is classical; the walk is not. The current piece uses new technology to capture Nauman walking forward and backward, to and fro, ‘turn and turn about’.<sup>179</sup> As Nauman states, reflecting on his use of the body in the work, “I realized it wasn’t abstract. There’s a lot of emotional content when you use your body, because it’s your body.”<sup>180</sup>
- Merce Cunningham would agree. As Caroline Brown recounts, in *Chance and Circumstance*, Merce said that “choreography could not be abstract because it was conceived and performed by a human being.”<sup>181</sup> “Dance is an action and a thing.”<sup>182</sup>
- That sense of ‘thingness’, is what comes across in my series of drypoint etchings *Glint I–VII* (March 2016, New York City). Seen together, frieze-like, they give the impression of the archaic: seven poised archaic figures, deeply carved into the plate, embody their human experience.
- “Man can embody truth but he cannot know it.”<sup>183</sup>

\* \* \*

**Matter to Matter**  
*October 2016*

The roots of the word ‘matter’, according to Webster, are *matière* in French and *materia* in Latin.

In art-speak we often refer to artwork as ‘material’: it is material stuff and it matters who makes it. The physicality of the maker

<sup>177</sup> Linda Karshan, ‘The Assigned Figure, or “existence is a curve”’, in McCully, *Measure Without Measure*.  
<sup>178</sup> Randy Kennedy, ‘A Provocateur is Back. Are You Ready?’, *The New York Times*, 11 September 2016.  
<sup>179</sup> Nauman, too, is obsessed by Beckett. See his *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968).  
<sup>180</sup> Randy Kennedy, ‘A Provocateur is Back. Are You Ready?’  
<sup>181</sup> Carolyn Brown, *Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009).  
<sup>182</sup> Charles Olson, on the work of Merce Cunningham.  
<sup>183</sup> W. B. Yeats, in a letter to Lady Elizabeth Pelham dated 4 January 1939, in Allen Wade, ed., *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (New York: Macmillan, 1955, p. 922.

matters, as does her ‘exceptional presence’ of mind.<sup>184</sup> When all goes well<sup>185</sup> - when mind enters into the scheme – we solve the problem of the connection of soul and body.<sup>186</sup>

\* \* \*

**Mathematisch-  
Physikalischer  
Salon, Staatliche  
Kunstsammlungen,  
Dresden**  
*19 November –  
3 December 2016*

In preparation for the printmaking workshop I revisited this remarkable collection of scientific and mathematical instruments. The visit confirmed all I felt about man’s place in measuring the world / my stance in measuring my world.

My body acts as the ruler and the compass. Here are the notes I made on Saturday 19 November 2016:

STELLAR POSITIONS: Every dance in time has a sacred model. Look at the movements of the stars.

A survey of the world: historical clocks, globes and early scientific instruments dating back as far as the sixteenth century demonstrate technical progress in past ages.<sup>187</sup>

August the Strong, the Elector of Saxony, was keen to collect and even use these instruments to measure his land and prove his erudition and political power. The compasses and rulers have special significance for me: my body naturally moves as a ruler / as a compass to measure and mark my place in the world, on the sheet, wood, metal or stone.

Moving in the manner of nature, proving the logic of body and mind, with no strings attached.

STELLAR POSITIONING: MEASURING / SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE STARS. See new large woodcut (below), made in Dresden on 28 November 2016 as proof.

EXPERIMENTATION BRINGS FORTH TRUTH: (as I discovered)

The Sastonomical Circle; The Quadrant: 1 ‘Mark’ = 16 ‘Lots’. Indeed.

Sundial: The angle divisions must be accurate.

<sup>184</sup> Matthias Bärmann, describing Linda Karshan’s state of exceptional presence whilst making her work, in his essay in the catalogue to the exhibition, ‘August Form 2002’ at Galerie Werner Klein, Cologne, 2003  
<sup>185</sup> D. W. Winnacott is describing the infant-mother relationship.  
<sup>186</sup> See C. S. Peirce, ‘On The Doctrine of Necessity Examined’.  
<sup>187</sup> See studio jotting on the Dresden Compass.



Sector/Proportionality: Each sector of the circle must be proportional and right (see new small wood cut of the circle divided into sectors).

Dividers: the openings of the sector limbs. My limbs. The circle divided into 4 x 8 sectors. Drafting compass with ‘toothed’ wheel, to BETTER KEEP TIME.

\* \* \*

**An exhibition at Galerie Ursula Walter, Dresden**  
21 November–2 December 2016

The exhibition ‘Handpressendrucke 2016: Diversity of Stars’ included printworks by Verena Appel, Andreas Garn, Stefan Knechtel, Stefan Lenke Gudrun Trendafilov and Linda Karshan (with her drypoint woodcut, show at left in the installation shot below).

LK was filmed at Galerie Ursula Walter on 2 December 2016 by Harald Schluttig for his film *The Assigned Figure*.

\* \* \*



Installation shot of the exhibition ‘Handpressendrucke 2016: Diversity of Stars’ at Galerie Ursula Walter, Dresden



Still from Harald Schluttig's film *The Assigned Figure*, 2016

Harald Schluttig/weißraum, Dresden

***Double-Yellow-Drive, in the Manner of Nature***  
1 December 2016, Dresden

With a nod to German Romanticism, so far as I understand it, the corners of my woodblock print asked to be yellow and blue.

To my surprise and delight, the ‘double-yellow’ corner – double, so as to have the same weight as the blue – ‘drove’ the form clockwise, in the Manner of Nature.

Thus the embodied nature of my art found expression in the print. The coloured corners both ‘popped’ yet were integrated into the sheet.

The piece appears to be a found object.

\* \* \*



*Double-Yellow-Drive*, December 2016  
This work was created and named in collaboration with Peter Stephan of the Grafikwerkstatt, Dresden

©Allison Wucher, Linda Karshan Studio

**Winter Jotting**  
*January–February 2017*

- I. Henry James: his art was a ruling PATTERN, or instrument.  
“Learning to play it in perfection... that’s what I call duty, what I call conduct, what I call success.”<sup>188</sup>

“These are not ritual rules, but PHYSICAL laws.”<sup>189</sup>

“Principally, Karshan’s practice is about the relationship between the body and the process of drawing.”<sup>190</sup>

“To live outside the law you must be honest.”<sup>191</sup>

*Linda Karshan at the Reform: Marks and Traces*

- II. *Reform Review*, February 2017

So Linda Karshan stood in a proud line of distinguished artists who had been members and, Dr Urbach concluded, the club was delighted that she had presented her work in a wonderful exhibition. The Head of The Courtauld Gallery, Dr Ernst Vegelin van Claerbergen, then outlined for guests the artist’s career and approach:

“When surveying an artist’s career, it is not uncommon to find oneself drawn to one or two periods in particular, years when the work seems especially powerful and persuasive. There is, of course, a subjective element to this but few artists manage to sustain a high pitch of creativity across several decades. A sharp edge may easily become blunted over time and the perceived need to remain relevant can lead to awkward and forced renewals.

Linda Karshan is a rare exception. Her oeuvre presents a sequence of richly coherent phases with each group of works more beautiful and gripping than the last. And linking it all is a clear organic development. This, it seems to me, has much to do with her singular approach and with a creativity sustained entirely from within. ‘Marks & Traces’, the current exhibition at the Reform Club, gives a glimpse of this.

Her work is represented in leading museums and galleries around the world, from the Metropolitan Museum and the Morgan Library in New York, to the British Museum and the Courtauld in London, and the great print rooms of Berlin, Munich and the Dresden.

The cover of the catalogue to the exhibition ‘Marks & Traces’ at the Reform Club, London, 2017, using NE1, an etching from 2002

188 Henry James, *The Tragic Muse* (see studio jotting, ‘Particular Forms, Summer 2004’).

189 Clark Coolidge, on Samuel Beckett’s *Quad* (see studio jotting, ‘Flashing Conviction, Summer 2004’).

190 Elizabeth Tomos, *Linda Karshan at The Reform: Marks and Traces*, catalogue to the exhibition at the Reform Club, London, January–February 2017.

191 Bob Dylan, ‘Absolutely Sweet Marie’, Dwarf Music, 1966.



Dr Peter Urbach, Reform Club Archivist



Dr Ernst Vegelin, Head of The Courtauld Gallery



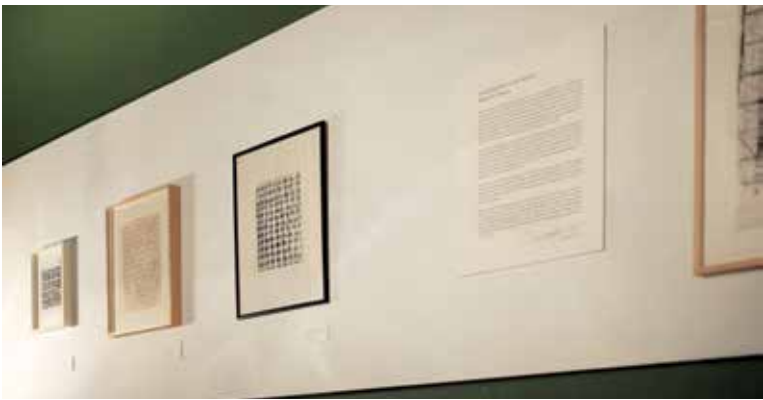
LK at the Reform Club

Such is the recognition of a career that has focused entirely on printmaking and drawing. It is characterised today by masterful abstract compositions consisting of grids of lines and spare open arrangements, drawn with breath-taking technical control.

This technical control has developed through practice and training, but ultimately it comes from within, and that is precisely what gives Linda Karshan’s work its eloquence and quality. The exhibition includes Candida Richardson’s film of Linda in the East Dulwich studio which she has occupied since 1990. Here we see her remarkable working practice: the intense concentration, the rhythmic turning of the paper on the work surface, the counting of time, the arrangement of the body.

Superficially, lines that may at first be assumed to be ruled are shown to have been drawn entirely freehand. But the film underscores that this has very little to do with manual dexterity. The whole body is an instrument in the creative process and consequently the drawn line becomes a manifestation of the physical and the inner self. And in this manner, an art which is entirely non-figurative is also revealed to be deeply humanistic, rooted in the individual.

Ultimately this is the age-old language of Classical proportions and it is intensely pleasing to see it echoed in the architecture of the Reform Club, including the rational dimensions of the exhibition room. The effect is subtle and enchanting, enhancing the experience of Linda Karshan’s work which, as ever, fizzles in the mind long after parting.”<sup>192</sup>



Installation shot of ‘Marks & Traces’ at the Reform Club

192 Michael Green (ed.), *Reform Review*, London, Winter 2017.

III. In Linda Karshan's studio, with The Courtauld Director's Circle

Notes for the visit, Thursday, 2 February 2017:

"How did it all begin?"

1. The 'spine' of Michelangelo

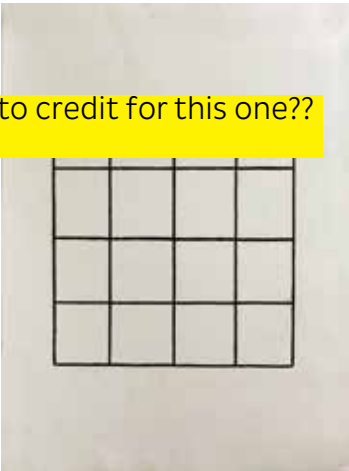
- a) In conversation with Stephanie Buck, as she prepared her exhibition 'Michelangelo's Dream' at The Courtauld in 2010. We discussed the spine in his figures and how it related to the spine in my work.
- b) With Barnaby Wright in the café. It was decided that I would donate a drawing to the collection, to be selected by Stephanie and Barnaby. In fact, two were selected, one for each curator: one with the spine of Michelangelo/my spine, always characteristic of the work, for Stephanie. One ORLO, the large open form, for Barnaby. The 'hem' or outline, according to Alberti: the ORLO is enough to describe the entire form, so long as the line be precise.<sup>193</sup>

2. La Casa Buonarroti

- a) A drawing on display in the studio. Named after a drawing by Michelangelo of his house in Firenze. I spotted it, c. 2000, at an exhibition from La Casa Buonarroti in London. These 'carved out wheels' by Michelangelo had been turned and turned about, according to Allison Wright in her talk about my work during the exhibition, 'Linda Karshan at The Soane' at Sir John Soane's Museum, 2002.
- b) Michelangelo: "use the compasses in the eyes and not in the hand", in Vasari.<sup>194</sup> I quoted this within my workshop in the Prints and Drawings Study Room, as part of The Courtauld symposium The Intelligent Hand, 8 November 2014. This quote had come up again and again that day.

3. The Sculptural Quality of my work.

- a) The way the lines are incised or carved out. See the portfolio of drypoints, *Slow Learner*, in The Courtauld Collection and *Glint I-VII*, a series of seven etchings with drypoint.



29/03/2005 I, Casa Buonarroti, Cornered Out, graphite on paper, 76 x 56 cm

<sup>193</sup> Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura* [On Painting] (1435–36), translated with introduction and notes by John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956).

<sup>194</sup> Vasari, 'Michelangelo Buonarroti'.

- b) The mise-en-page: the way the forms fall on the sheet in my work. 'Lines Crossed, Grids and Rhythms on Paper', a display at The Courtauld in February 2012, organised by Allison Wucher. Allison presented my 'grids' as an example of the grid as mise-en-page. Other 'grids' included the gridded sheet, grid as perspective, grid as design and grid as narrative. This show was conceived in conjunction with 'Mondrian || Nicholson: In Parallel', curated by Barnaby Wright.

- c) "Listen, just listen. Listening to the sound is a sculptural act. The ear is the genuine sense of sculpture." Joseph Beuys.

1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8- Turn  
1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8- Turn

"To observe the OBVERSE, just listen." Oswald Egger

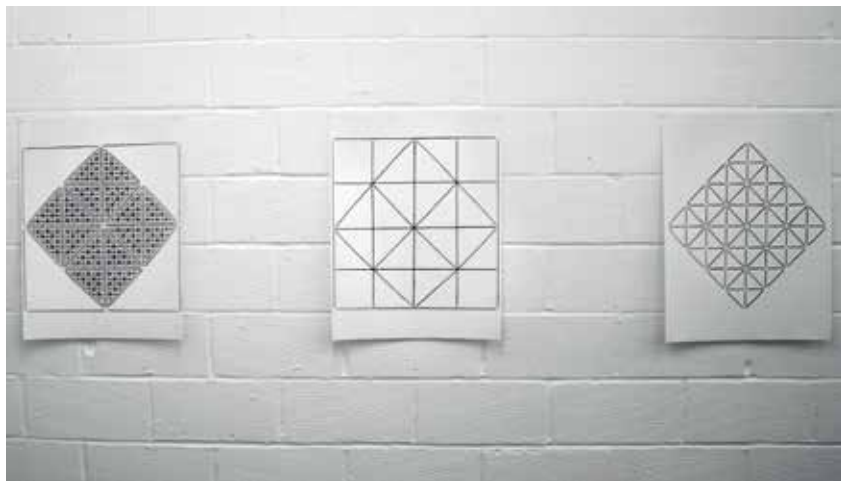
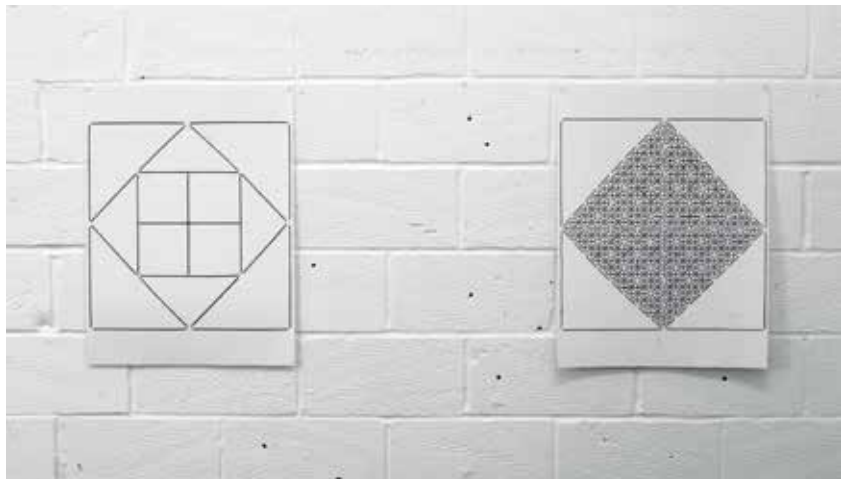
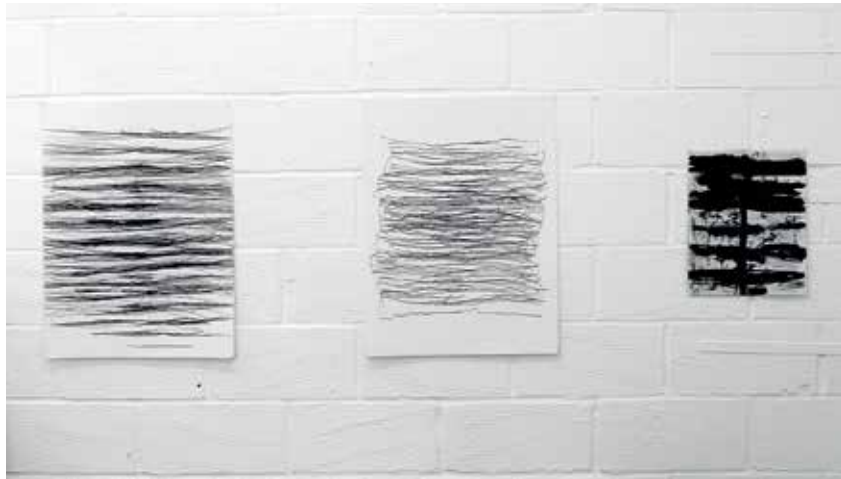
Three of these drawings are the 'other side' of the sheet. That is how the 'real work' may come through.



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Karshan studio installation  
shots, February 14, 2017



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*On to Leonardo and painting.  
Briefly*

Taken from *Leonardo on Painting: Anthology of Writings by Leonardo da Vinci with a Selection of Documents Relating to His Career as an Artist*, edited by Martin Kemp and Margaret Walker (Yale University Press, 2001).

The Human Body

1) Posture, Expression and Decorum.

“Posture is the first and most noble aspect of figure painting... but the movement of such a figure is necessarily engendered by a talent of great discernment.”

How the good painter has to paint two things: man and his mind. *moti del'animo* [movements of the mind, or soul moves].

“Man... and the intention of his mind... the latter has to be presented through gestures and movements of his limbs...”

“How a figure is not praiseworthy if it does not display actions which express the passion of its feelings.”

“That figure is most praiseworthy which expresses through its actions, the passion of its mind.”

“The movements of men should be as required by their dignity or baseness.”

“To be upright and alert, in a moral sense too.” LK, in studio jottings, *passim*.



Linda Karshan with  
*Leonardo on Painting*

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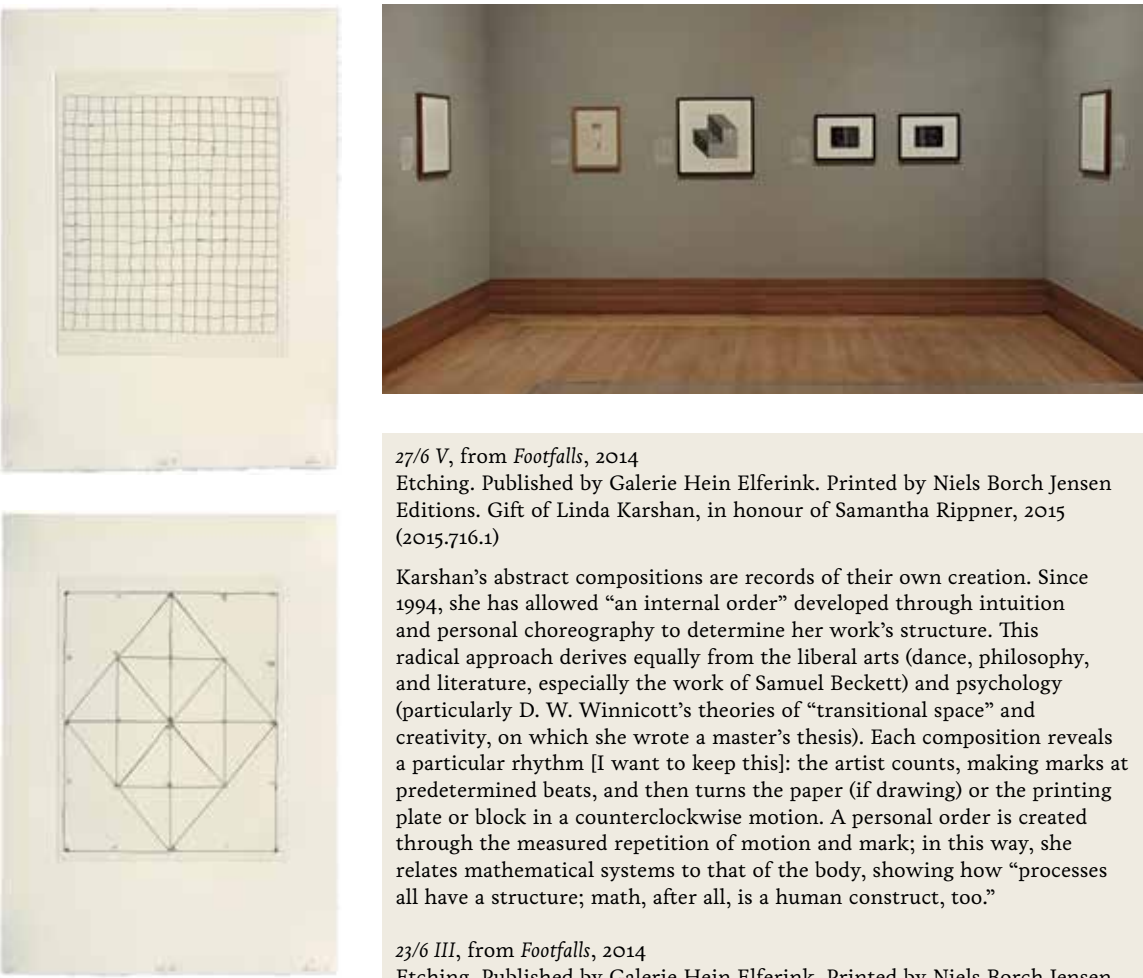
IV. Back at The Reform Club with Friends of The Courtauld, Tuesday, 7 February 2017



Installation shots of the exhibition 'Marks & Traces' at the Reform Club, London, 2017

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V. 'Picturing Math', exhibition at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 31 January–28 April 2017



Top 27/6 V, from *Footfalls*, 2014.  
Above 23/6 III, from *Footfalls*, 2014.  
Above right Installation shot of  
'Picturing Math', with LK's prints  
either side of works by Josef Albers  
and Sol LeWitt, February 2017.  
Right Texts of the curatorial labels  
for each of LK's prints on display:

27/6 V, from *Footfalls*, 2014  
Etching. Published by Galerie Hein Elferink. Printed by Niels Borch Jensen Editions. Gift of Linda Karshan, in honour of Samantha Rippner, 2015 (2015.716.1)

Karshan's abstract compositions are records of their own creation. Since 1994, she has allowed "an internal order" developed through intuition and personal choreography to determine her work's structure. This radical approach derives equally from the liberal arts (dance, philosophy, and literature, especially the work of Samuel Beckett) and psychology (particularly D. W. Winnicott's theories of "transitional space" and creativity, on which she wrote a master's thesis). Each composition reveals a particular rhythm [I want to keep this]: the artist counts, making marks at predetermined beats, and then turns the paper (if drawing) or the printing plate or block in a counterclockwise motion. A personal order is created through the measured repetition of motion and mark; in this way, she relates mathematical systems to that of the body, showing how "processes all have a structure; math, after all, is a human construct, too."

23/6 III, from *Footfalls*, 2014  
Etching. Published by Galerie Hein Elferink. Printed by Niels Borch Jensen Editions. Gift of Linda Karshan, in honour of Mark McDonald, 2015 (2015.716.2)

While Karshan's work evokes Minimalist art and the presumed neutrality of math, her deeply personal process structured around the rhythm of her body complicates those associations. The artist's movements determine not only the form of her work, but also the length of the lines and the ways in which they intersect. For *Footfalls*, Karshan began with a printing plate covered in hard-ground wax that contained a matrix of small dots, against which she created marks that correspond to her internal system of counting. Irregular and distinct, the lines break, bend, and reflect other variations, disrupting the seriality, order, and impersonality of the grid—a form ubiquitous in both modern and contemporary art and mathematical systems. Structure emerges as her work reveals the movement from, in her words, "the organic toward a geometric and arithmetic progression."

Peter Zera



VI *The Dresden Experience II, 20–25 February 2017*  
Educating the stone. Being educated by the stone.

Making lithographs with Peter Stephan at the Grafikwerkstatt, Dresden.

- The limestones are 50 million years old, at a guess.
- (add photo) Layers of the stone
- Each layer has markings very like my own
- “The stone remembers”, say Peter, as he prepares it for printing.

Alternate washes of nitric acid and gum arabic are applied.

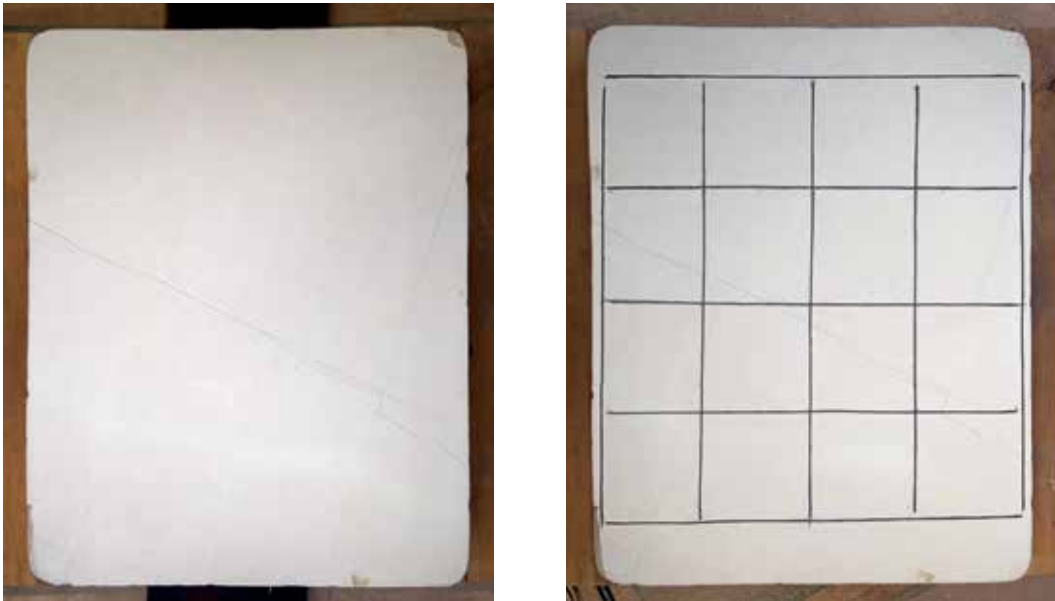
Tap tap tap,  
Twirl, twirl, twirl

The liquids are tapped/patted with a sponge.  
The drying between baths is hurried along with a handmade fan.  
All the tools and the inks are organic. The stone likes it that way.

“Teaching the stone to ‘play’ between water and fat. It is a balance.”



“Educating the stone, being  
educated by the stone”.  
LK photographed in the  
Grafikwerstatt in Dresden,  
February 2017



Stills from the film *Linda Karshan – Educating the stone; Being educated by the stone, 2017*

Harald Schlüttig/weisraum, Dresden

“Lithography is the call and response of marks through the ages. A  
bloodline from hand to stone to hand.” Elizabeth Palmer, in a note  
to LK, February 2017  
– Telling the stone [what] are printing areas and [what] are not  
printing areas.

- When the stone is ‘educated’, Peter wipes the drawing away.
- Then, as if by magic, the lines reappear when the ink is rolled over the dampened stone.

Notes on lithography

Lithography is a print technique invented by Alois Senefelder in 1796 to meet the demands of modern times. Entertainment of the day – theatre, dance hall, music – needed sheet music, playbills and posters. He invented lithography to fit the bill.

Just as Peter educated the stone, LK was educated by the stone. Responding to the history held within its layers, her lines aspired to their natural grace.

VII    *The Dresden Experience, continued*  
*Galerie Ursula Walter, exhibition opening, 24 February 2017*

The exhibition ‘analoge tragflächen’, with work by Ines Beyer, Bernadette Bour, Kirsten Jäschke, Linda Karshan and Ursula Sax, at the Galerie Ursula Walter, Dresden, 24.02–26.03.2017



Galerie Ursula Walter, 24 February 2017

Harald Schlütting/weissraum, Dresden

**Spring Jotting 2017**  
*Letter written to Jennifer*  
*Farrell, curator, Metropolitan*  
*Museum of Art, New York*

*‘Picturing Math’: a synthesis of thoughts and understandings, as relevant to this display.*<sup>195</sup>

Dear Jennifer,

I have now spent a considerable amount of time within this wonderful display – enough time to bring together selected thoughts on the relationships of my work to the whole.

(These thoughts will also serve as a component of this season’s jottings. They help ME understand myself, and my place here... so no need to use them or even consider them, Jennifer, if you prefer to go ‘free style’ on 19 April... as does Augie March in the opening lines of Bellow’s great early novel.)

I keep coming back to this line by Beckett’s *Molloy*: “Extraordinary how mathematics can help you know yourself”.

To ‘know yourself’: this was a great preoccupation of the early modern period, as it had been in Classical Antiquity before. Here, once again was Humanism. Thus these ‘moderns’ turned to classical texts. So it is to the books/drawings/prints, based on classical thinking, that I feel the closest affinity within the Johnson Gallery.

In my case, of the greatest relevance, is the way ‘embodiment’ can be seen and understood as a means of KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION.

Classical proportions, based, as ever, ON THE HUMAN BODY, are deeply inscribed within me.

Deeply inscribed; like hieroglyphs, even. Hieroglyph: a sacred carving, according to Webster’s dictionary.

Measuring the world: this idea was revived during the Renaissance and the early Modern period. Thus the importance of precise methods; thus the preoccupation with mathematics and geometry. Most of these images on view ‘picture’ numbers and TOOLS. And human THOUGHT and CONTEMPLATION. Uniquely in this display, my prints add notions of embodiment and movement to the picture. (Perhaps the beautiful ‘equations’ drawn out across the gallery encompass movement, too?)

“By supposing the rigid exactitude of causation to yield, I care not how little... we gain room to insert MIND into our scheme, and to

<sup>195</sup> See installation shots on p. 135 above.

put it into the... position which, as the sole self-intelligible thing, it is entitled to occupy, that of the FOUNTAIN OF EXISTENCE; and in so doing we resolve the problem of the connection of Soul and Body.” C. S. Peirce, “The Doctrine of Necessity Examined”

In my work, mind/body/heart and soul come together within the ‘moving figure assigned to me’. This ‘moving figure’ also happens to be a ‘picture’ of Time. ‘Time, being’; a ‘Measure Without Measure’. My body is the measuring tool.

It is also a picture of ‘exactitude winged by intuition’, as Paul Klee admonished his students at the Bauhaus.

This is ‘choreography’, writ true: ‘graphing’ the body/drawing the corps.

So I relate first and foremost with those exhibits concerned with measuring the body and the world: Vitruvius/Dürer/Puvis de Chavannes. One can liken the spine in my work to Puvis’ study of Philosophy for the mural at the Sorbonne. It is not insignificant, perhaps, that I spent my Junior year in Paris, studying at the Sorbonne. NOW I understand why I was so drawn to Puvis as a student in 1968. All those figures, so ‘upright and alert’. Always in classical proportion, in pursuit of knowledge.

One can even imagine my ‘grid-like’ form to be the ‘matrix’ for Dürer’s *Melancholia*, so close are the measurements of these plates and the proportions described within.

So, too, can one see the connection of my ‘Vitruvian man’, as I named this print, to the illustration of a page of Vitruvius’s *Treatise on Architecture*, just across the way. (So true, yet flexible, were his calculations that they could be adapted to the Gothic. Properly placed atop – beneath? – the Gothic structure, the classic ‘bit’ sits at the ‘heart’ of things, while the spirit can soar above in medieval form, as dictated by religion of the day.

While Albers and LeWitt, my closest neighbours, are concerned to eliminate the human touch, my etchings are nothing is not human and humane – nothing if not figurative.

Pared down; always upright and alert. ‘It’s a Greek Thing’.

Linda Karshan, 12 March, NYC

\* \* \*

**Part II**  
26 April 2017

Extraordinary how Mathematics helps you to know yourself.

Mine is the age-old language of Classical Proportions.

It’s a singular approach sustained entirely within the body. It is humanistic, rooted in the individual.

I show – prove – how embodiment can be a form of knowledge production.

Leonardo was looking for vital form, and analogy. He was seeking a universal system of proportion that would explain the fundamental workings of the forces of nature.

He was the first to tie the artist’s notion of proportional action into the wider setting of proportional action of all the powers of nature.

Look at the movements of the stars.

\* \* \*

**Part III**  
26 April 2017

A poem by Charles Olson:

An American  
is a complex of occasions  
themselves a geometry  
of spatial nature.

I have this sense,  
that I am one  
with my skin.

(with the instruments of measure held within)

*Part Three*

## **INSCRIBED MATTER TO MATTER**





Detail of *19/1/99 (1)*, 1999, etching

Adam Palmer

## Linda Karshan: Inscribed Matter to Matter

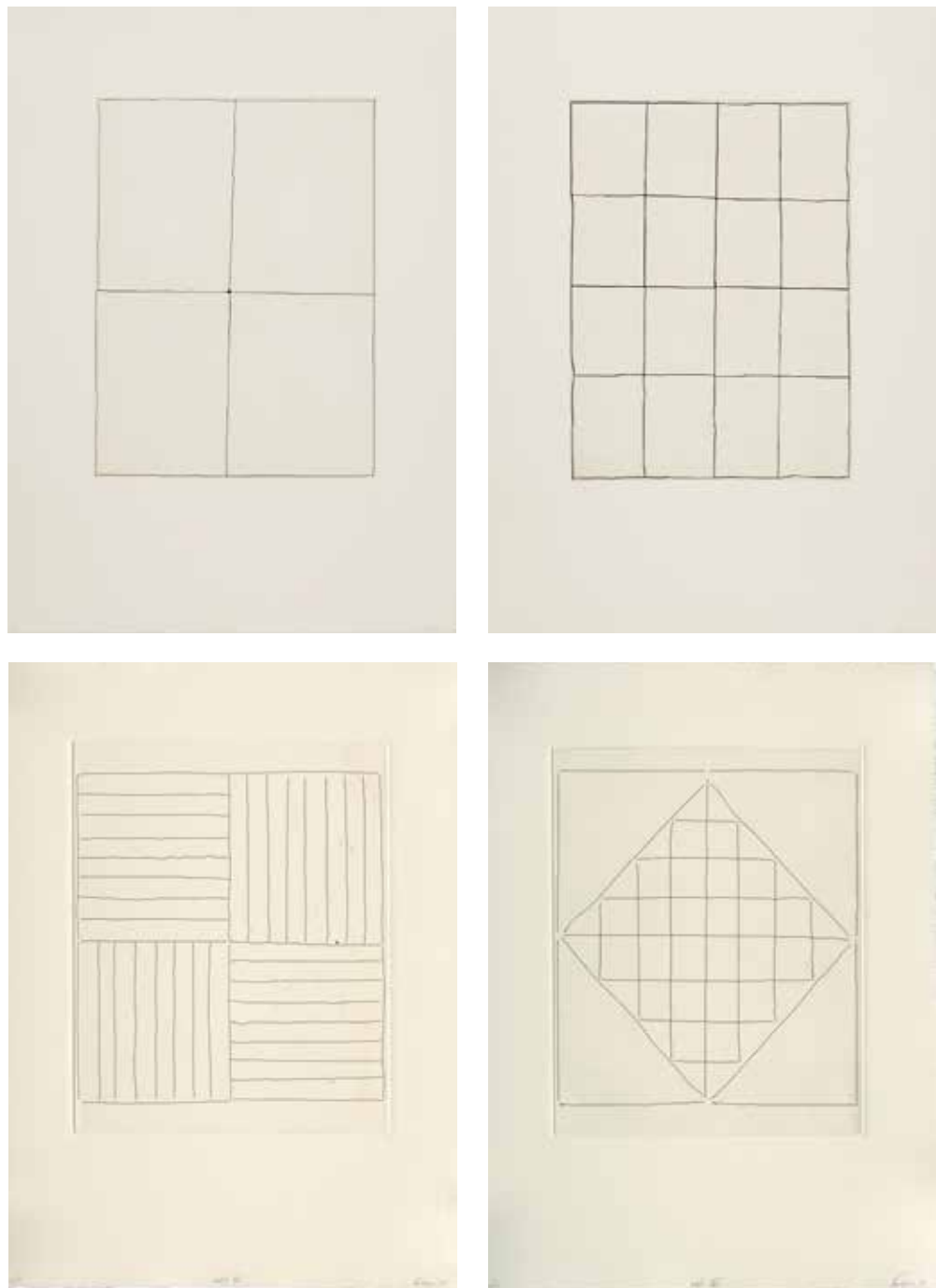
Elizabeth Tomos

Embodiment as a means of making art can be characterized as being actively engaged with and through the body, usually exacted in a particular locality or place. This will often manifest itself through ritualising and drawing attention to actions of the body; such as walking, swimming, dancing and breathing. There is a clear relationship between these ideas and both the life and work of Linda Karshan.

Indeed, Karshan's practice explores the relationship between the body and the process of drawing. She draws and prints to the rhythm of an internal choreography that guides her actions and movements. When making work, Karshan stands poised in arabesque, like a ballerina, over the paper or printing plate. She moves through an internal, numerical count which falls at intervals of 2, 4, 8 or 16. The sheet or plate she is working on is turned anti-clockwise through 90 degrees in response to these internal directions. The count begins on entry to the studio and continues throughout her working day: it informs her movements and sets the pace and tonality of the mark-making. The count, whilst providing a framework for her way of working, is not rigid. In fact, it varies at times faster and at times a little slower. The counts adjust to the inflection of the marks and vice versa. This allows her flexibility within the rule in order to be attuned to the emerging art work. In fact, Karshan often notes that she is, in a sense, listening both to the internal rhythm of her body and to the marks themselves. In this respect, she allows a conversation between her body and the emergent mark. The marks literally embody her physical and mental state. The marks reflect their making; minute wavers in form reflect the very breath, pressure and mood of their execution.

Her works, therefore, can be read expressly as 'bodily': the verticals speak of the spinal column and the horizontals of outstretched limbs. Although she is naturally left handed, she draws with her right hand, without the aid of rulers, which ensures a connection between her state of 'being' (mind and body), her internal rhythm and the marks on the sheet or plate. As such her whole body including stance, posture and action have minute attention paid to them and are finely balanced to orchestrate marks that reflect her bodily state. This is particularly well revealed in Candida Richardson's film *Movements and their Images*, which looked at the symbiotic relationship between Karshan's bodily gesture and traces on the paper.

The grid motif in her work is of particular significance in highlighting the relationship between the drawn mark and her body. The grid is itself anthropomorphic, as it is structurally representing the body; the central vertical as the spine and the horizontal the bend of the waist. This grid alters according to shifts in her own body reflecting the nature of her rhythm as she channels that into her interaction with a surface. This choice of form is interesting and can be seen to be deeply tied to her modernist training; yet it is equally indicative of her understanding of ballet and contemporary dance. In a sense, the grid represents the dancer – upright, pulled up through the centre or solar plexus, through the spine,



Top row: two etchings from the 'Slow Learner' portfolio, published by Jean-Yves Noblet Contemporary Prints, New York in 2007; bottom row: two etchings from *Footfalls*, printed by Hein Elferink

© The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London. Courtesy Hein Elferink Gallery

flexible along the core lines reaching out from the central point of the solar plexus. Strength in a dancer always comes from that centre which then powers out along the extremities. Karshan's grids even look like Laban notation, which is used to denote choreography. In the same way that the scoring process for dance provides symbols to indicate a movement out from that central line, a minute waver in the wrist becomes an inflection of the body to the left or the right.

The metaphor of choreography is fitting in relation to Karshan's work, as she marks out her physical presence in both space and time. The 'choreography' is manifested through the structure of the drawings and the repetition of 'choreographic' motifs in her lexical set of marks. All of which provides a framework that allows us to truly see the minute shifts in the visual record of her internal sensibility. This is particularly clear in the drypoint plates of Karshan's portfolio of 32 drypoint etchings *Slow Learner* (2007), her first major foray into drypoint etching. With each plate you can clearly see her development of 'bodily' knowledge, as the tension between surface, tool, hand and breath is explored and Karshan has to shift her approach to the material. In this series, the line markedly reflects the muscular tension and effort incised on the plate. The recent films of her stone lithography work evidence this still further.

Karshan's interest in psychology, particularly in D. W. Winnicott and his notion of transitional space, provides a framework for both the purpose of the act of creativity and its means of embodiment in artistic production. Here, Karshan argues that, when inhabiting the right state of being, it is possible to bring forth marks that embody creativity. Karshan describes this as an almost trance-like condition in which all her senses are alert. She seeks to occupy Winnicott's transitional space<sup>1</sup> by tapping into an intuitive, subconscious state; a mixture of being both concentrated and self-forgetful, in which she is 'awake, aware but not too much'. Both Becker<sup>2</sup> and Cotter<sup>3</sup> talk about this space as one of extreme vulnerability due to its precarious, in-between nature and the way in which she has to allow herself to be attuned to the emerging marks. However, it is equally a state of great strength and control. It is a strange paradox in which chance is given great credence but the process is equally highly disciplined and constructed. This state of mind and body, as Winnicott argues, is a state that encourages pure creativity. A state of uprightness that is both a physical and bodily posture and a way of being, thinking and acting but is equally a place of learning. Karshan often talks about the way that she 'learns' from her marks: in a sense they have a life of their own, at times staccato and frenetic, at others sustained and controlled. Her drawing embodies her internal rhythms and forms through mark-making but in turn the embodied marks teach and shape her body and movements. The transitional space is the 'place' that allows these multiple means of knowledge production to exist simultaneously, mediated through the body, embodied in space and time.

The body, then, can be seen as tool or scientific instrument, but its use has been somewhat forgotten. The development of enlightenment thinking through

<sup>1</sup> D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (Oxford: Routledge Classics, 2005), pp. 55–86

<sup>2</sup> Lutz Becker, in *Linda Karshan: Drawings* (London and Munich: Redfern Gallery/Galerie Biedermann, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> S. Cotter, 'Body Language', in the catalogue to the exhibition 'Linda Karshan' (Valencia, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, 2002), p. 16.

modernity has created a paradigm in which the body and its senses are no longer trusted as a means of understanding the world and our place in it. As Sullivan<sup>4</sup> and others like him argue, artistic production was once viewed as an important means of researching and understanding the world through the power of observation, with as much status as that of the natural sciences. This position has depleted as subjectivity, the body, the senses and intuition have been relegated to the sidelines in favour of empiricism, logic and reason. Karshan’s practice demonstrates that it is possible to engage in observation of the creative act through the haptic (touch & perception), allowing the body to inform and impart wisdom to her. Her persistent and structured methodology act almost as a set of controls for the research, providing a framework in which creativity can be better understood.

This approach potentially has broader socio-political ramifications. Indeed, in recent years scholarship has begun to redress the importance of embodiment (of which haptic observation would form a part) designating “the body as an experiencing agent”, as opposed to object.<sup>5</sup> This revived scholarship has been seen as urgently needed in light of the way in which the postmodern world has become focused toward a performed self, toward representation of self and away from embodiment. Linda Karshan offers a clear example of using physicality as a means to connect with the conceptualisation and construction of ourselves and the world around us.

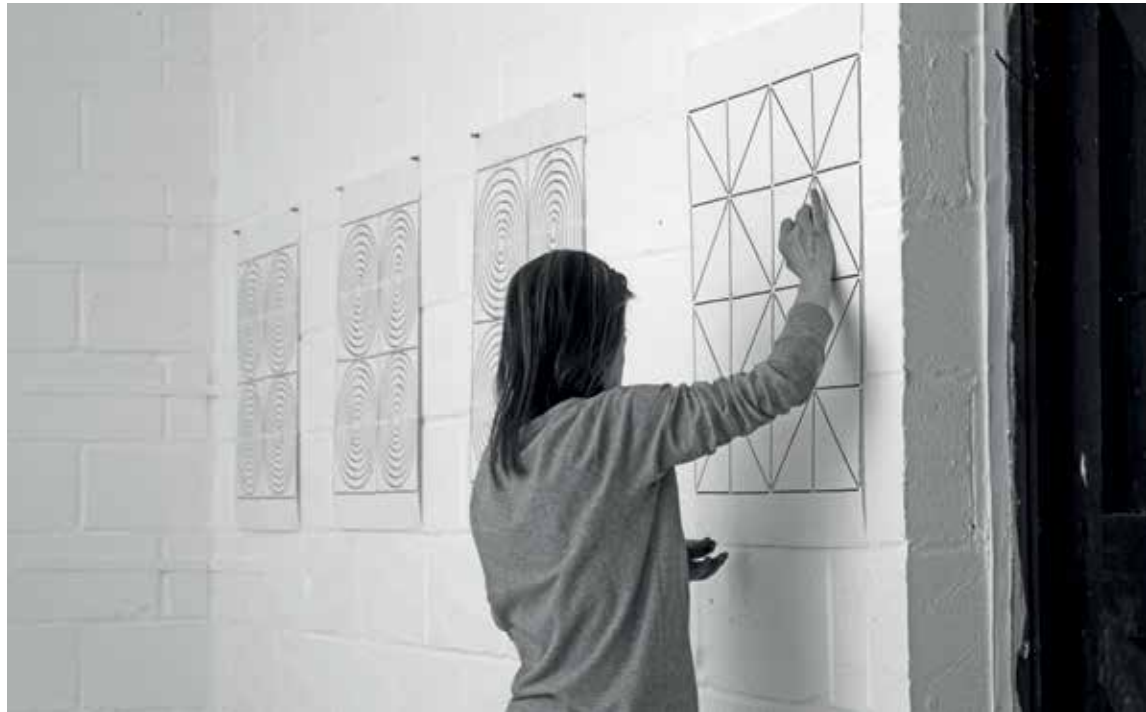
4 Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: inquiry in the visual arts* (2nd edition), Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), pp. 5–8.

5 T. J. Csordas, ‘Introduction: the body as representation and being-in-the-world’, in T. J. Csordas, ed., *Embodiment and Experience: The existential ground of culture and self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 2.



Harald Schlutwig/weissraum, Dresden





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Above LK in her, London studio, 2015.  
Left LK drawing on lithographic stone, Dresden, 2016. Film still from *Linda Karshan: Educating the Stone, Being Educated by the Stone* by Harald Schluttig

Harald Schluttig/weissraum, Dresden

## Linda Karshan in conversation with Elizabeth Tomos

*This is an extract from an interview conducted with Linda Karshan in her Dulwich studio in 2015. The subject of the interview focused on the relationship between performance, the body and her mark-making. Given that printmaking has become increasingly significant to Karshan's making, the changes that this shift in medium has brought to bear on her process are also a dominant theme in the dialogue.*

*Elizabeth Tomos: How would you say that the notion of 'performance' connects with your practice?*

*Linda Karshan: José Férrez Kuri used to say that if he knocked on my studio wall, he thought my drawings would 'sound' back. Give back sounds. The drawings on the walls of the studio today are those drawn while I was being recorded drawing, which has given rise to a sound sculpture called *Soundings*. Now, as we are talking about performance of course, the ghost grid that you see is the mark of the stop start, it is the marks of the precise timing by which the drawing was made.*

*Because you have a rhythm that you always use...?*

*Internal rhythm and number, it is the moving figure assigned to me. I have no choice but to follow that.*

*And when did that come?*

*It appeared in 1994, one day. I had been waiting for it. Not only do I have this training from the Bauhaus, Josef Albers' basic drawing basic design, where I was taught to build the drawing so it didn't fall apart, cross those corners, but I went further and I have a master's degree in Psychology. I looked particularly at the doctrine and the theory of Donald Winnicott. He is my guiding spirit. My work absolutely comes through transitional space. My master's thesis was called *Play, creativity and the birth of the self*. In it, I proposed an analogy between the mother with her new-born infant; the analyst and the analysand; and the artist and the emerging artwork: the way that in these three 'dialogues' creative work occurs through 'transitional space', as defined by D W Winnicott. I am absolutely committed to that transitional space through which, as he said, anything original can be made.*

*And so, from 1983 until 1994, it was very hit and miss in my work as to whether I would achieve work from that transitional space. One could call what I was doing organic abstraction or abstract surrealism... drawing from the unconscious and yet the structure and rhythm in me was slowly, gradually, gradually finding its form. One day I felt the count: 1, 2, 3, 4 ... 5, 6 ...7, 8, turn. 1, 2, 3, 4... 5, 6...7, 8, turn. I thought... here we go! Hold on tight! Don't stop! Don't*



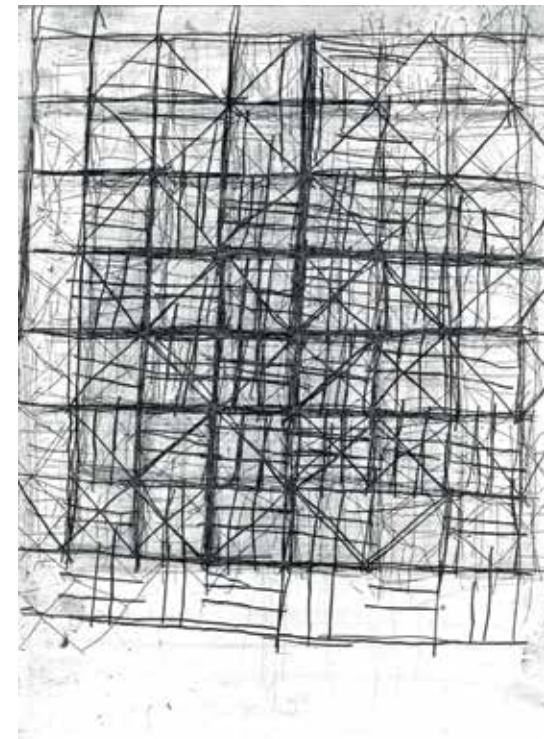
interfere. Don't 'impinge', as Winnicott would say, on the work. From that day I called the drawing a self-portrait because really it established the parameters of every drawing. It established the form, which is almost like the template for every drawing I have done since. It is almost as if it all comes from one drawing – sometimes horizontal, vertical, sometimes there's no curves, no diagonals – but that's how the form sits on the sheet.

It's the same in printmaking because I work in the same way, though of course it is a challenge because I have to turn the plate rather than paper. The very first time that I came to make prints with printer Todd Norsten, I said to him I don't know anything about printmaking. He said it doesn't matter, "You do the drawing, I'll make the prints". When he telephoned, and asked, "what size plate?"... I mean what did I know...? I asked for a plate the size of the A1 paper I normally draw on, which was completely impractical and unwieldy. Of course I normally work on the table, I turn the page with the count, but this is a big plate! And so I said "Tod, I have to take it to the floor", so I took it to the floor. The large etching that transpired is called *Marks*, which has evocative footprints. In this sense you can literally see the body in the drawing process!

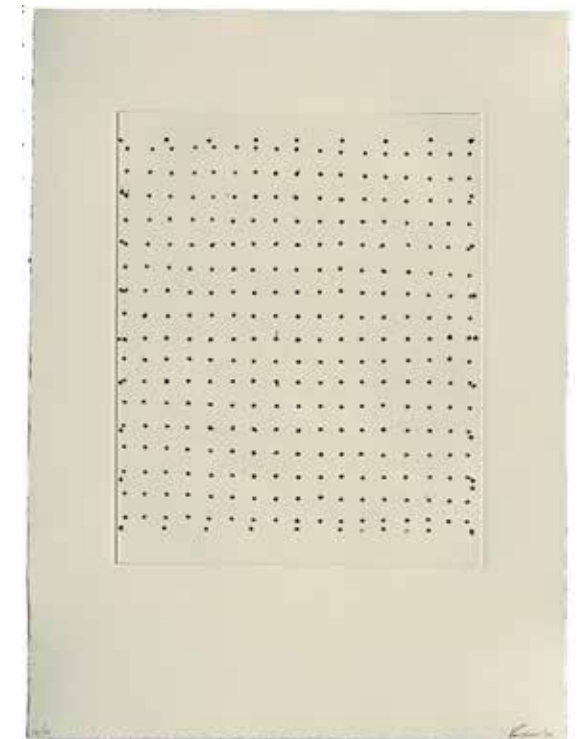


*Self-Portrait*, 1994, oil pastel, pencil and Indian ink on paper, 32.2 x 27 cm

I then began on a smaller scale with him. Speaking of performance, one of the first of these smaller etchings was called *Lucky's Dance* after *Waiting for Godot* by Beckett, who is another guiding light. Psychoanalytically, it would be Winnicott. In terms of any artistic practice, it would be Samuel Beckett, for his internal classicism, with the numbers and rhythms that prevail and in the structure of the plays and in the novels, particularly *Molloy*. In fact, the very day I made my 'self-portrait' I had been to see Beckett's tele-plays at the ICA. At the time, I knew nothing about Beckett but as I watched *Quad* on the screen it was as if I was watching my own drawings enacted on the stage. Four actors with their heads bent under hoods, looking down as they march in obedience to his famously precise stage directions – towards the centre and away, towards the centre and away – never quite getting to the centre. It was like *The Unnameable* says in his novel: "I like to think I occupy the centre but nothing could be less certain". So, it is always as if it were the centre of my body, these are portraits, and they are very bodily, very figurative. And whilst I draw them on the flat they are absolutely meant to be seen upright and alert, as I am when the drawings come into being.



*Marks*, 1996, etching, 607 x 455 mm



Frontispiece to *Footfalls*, 2014, 54 x 39.5 cm, from the portfolio of 27 etchings printed in an edition of 10 by Hein Elferink

*You use the language of both an 'organic' and a more structured rhythmical process. Could you talk a little more about the balance between these two things?*

It is always the same counting and turning but the energy of the rhythm changes. In fact, in an image where you can see heavier working, where the lines build up densely, it is because that's where my dance caused me to cross over again and again. In something like that, the rhythms would be probably little units of 8 and very quick marks. Over time and over the years there is always '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, turn', but the length of the line varies in accordance with the length of the count. There are quick marks, there are long lines, and these vary. For example, on the day that *Soundings* was recorded I was very fortunate that the drawing that day gave rise to four different kinds of sounds and three lengths of the lines that comprise the series of *Soundings* drawings. In addition, there is the sound of my footfall; my feet tap out my internal rhythm. This always begins when I walk into the studio. In fact, it was for this reasons that one series of prints is called *Footfalls*!

You hear the change of length of line, length of time. So you've got the long line. What you are hear first is drawing that back-side of the image – then you have the long lines and the short middle lines. For each different line, there are different sounds, more thoughtful sounds – that's the performance.

*Do you shift your material choice in accordance with this shift in rhythm?*

Yes. I mean right now I am using this propelling pencil because if it breaks I don't have to stop and sharpen it. Quite simply I can keep my rhythms going. I also hold materials in a certain way.

*Do you hold the printmaking tools in the same way or do you have to adjust?*

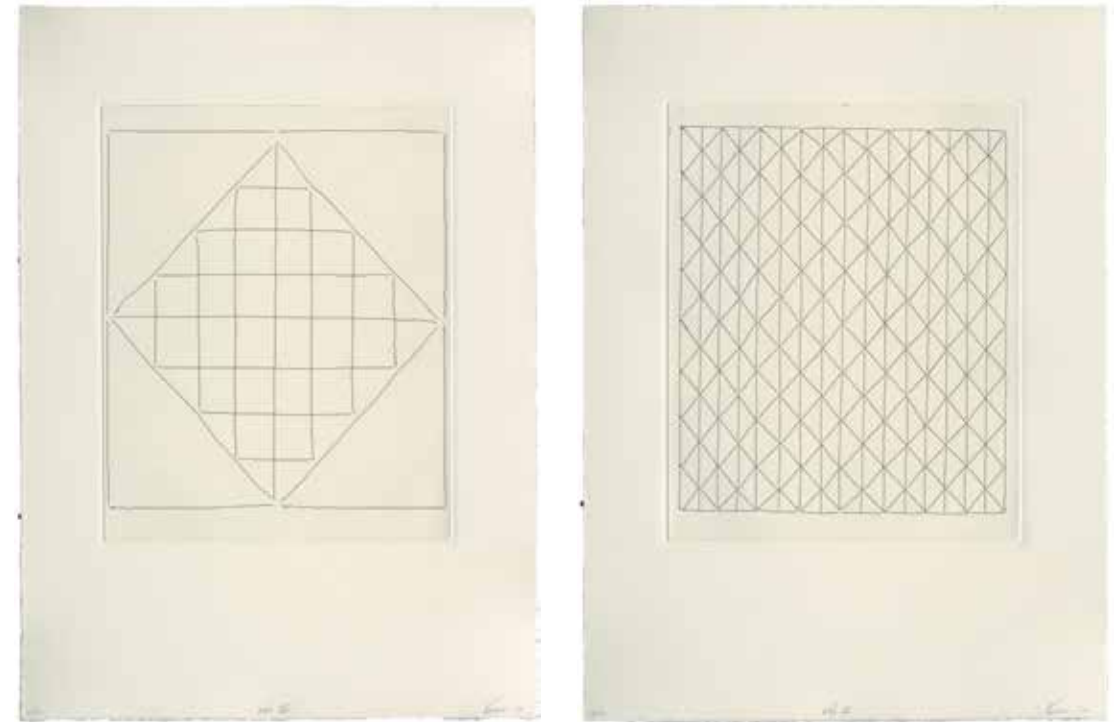
Well, I guess I have to adjust really, I do whatever feels graceful. I think now in a dry-point line; it's more like I hold the pencil. Obviously, when you are carving, the woodcut, you have to cut away from yourself! With the etching it's down. In terms of that adjustment I mean it's important I am a printmaker now, I make prints, I am a printmaker. As you know, with the drawing, I will go up, down and up and down. You know you can't do that in printmaking. So the etched line, or dry point line, it will be incised twice, to be sure that line is there.

*Does printmaking significantly change your rhythm then? Compared to drawing?*

To be sure but it is always to a count, always to a count... sometimes the count will be longer held or shorter. Yes it might be 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8 [rapid] or 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5, always up to 8, in the very early days there might have been 16 but that hasn't been around for a long time now it's the long held count. Also it's different for different lines. I am happy to shift as necessary... it's the job, it's my job to stay alert...

*To what the image is requiring of you?*

Quite, quite, quite, I respond to it, it's give and take. This is, as I wrote in my



Plates 24.06.vi (left) and 24.06.v (right) from *Footfalls*, 2014, each 54 x 39.5 cm, from the portfolio of 27 etchings printed in an edition of 10 by Hein Elferink

master's thesis 'Play, creativity and the birth of the self', dialogue, intuitive adaptation so I give the drawing what it needs, by working the back of a drawing when I turn it onto a clean sheet, which gives me traces to start the next. That's how I move from drawing to drawing. It's that wonderful ghost trace which unifies a drawing with the others.

I had to develop this technique further for printmaking and the approach is evidenced well in *Frontispiece*. In this work you can see just the points of the marks I intuitively created, used as a kind of template to position myself on every plate. After all there were 32 plates and it's a very tall order to cut the line well, to make a good drawing as well as to be sure the image is going to sit well on the plate. So in the Renaissance way, I had the idea to do a drawing on a piece of paper the size of the plate and punch holes at the intersections...

*'Pouncing': that's a lovely word in and of itself – it has performative qualities...*

Yes! Then I 'pounced'! So in that pounced piece, that template... I am going through the paper again and again with a very fine black felt tip, if I turn my sheet over, where you don't see my drawing, all you see is *Frontispiece*. The backside of the 'template drawing', where there were no pencil lines but only the blackened dots where the felt-tip had bled through, became the frontispiece of the series.



In a way *Soundings* and *Footfalls* make sense together because the numbers and the twirls are reminiscent of ‘May’ from Beckett’s *Footfalls*, and they help me get to that centre so I don’t lose my count. In fact, Beckett said, referring to *Footfalls*, “the sound of feet matter most. The words matter less”. In the play, May counts out loud as she walks to and fro on the stage, in a horizontal line 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 Twirl, and I go 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 Turn when I draw. So when I pounced out the small dots to position me on the *Footfalls* plates, I used May’s counts, so as to ‘hit’ the centre each time.

Paper is good, but when I started to make prints I thought I am a carver trapped in a draughtsman’s body. You know I love to make that mark and it is performative. I’m not a performance artist, I mean I wouldn’t do it in public but I am happy enough to be filmed in the studio because I think that it does really shed light [on my method] for people. I mean, they look at this and they say no, that’s not possible, you know, but it is possible and in truth you cannot speak of my work without speaking of its making.

*The relationship between your making process and the outcome – how important is that to you? I mean, in terms of that being visible to the viewer? It was quite some time before you considered showing it.*

Interesting point. I mean you do what you have to do. I was never one to overestimate the importance of anything... you just get on with it. I mean it was... There was a key moment when the body changed its position because it wanted to be more graceful.

*You wrote about this – “Every movement in the print studio should be graceful”*

Yes that, that is very true, all these things are highly significant. What had happened was that Tom Fecht had taken a series of the photos of me and at that time my stance was upright, alert, feet together, very lifted, and a reach. When I saw those photographs, I thought no, my body still looks cramped, I am too short to take that long line through. So when I got to New York – I was temporarily using a studio for reasons that we don’t need to go into here – I opened my stance to give me more movement. What was interesting, is that when Tom got me to draw with a torch so that he could photograph the movements, the result looked very much like Leonardo’s *Vitruvian Man*. There is a clear relationship between the bodily gestures I make and the lines I create. The drawings are of the body, they have a spine.

What happened first was this opening up of the body; first the stance, then the arabesque then it’s up on the toe and each of these changes in posture means that the form changes, of course. It swings. The body will find the position it needs to enact, to make that mark gracefully.

It occurred to me that the positions and movements of classical ballet are there because of man’s quest for grace. It’s not a construct, just as classicism in Greece didn’t come from nothing, it comes from the human body.

I just bought a book on the history of ballet. I was very interested, but not surprised, to read that in the late 16th century ballet was a courtly dance and was a matter of etiquette. It was about how one held oneself and there are ways to

holds oneself in order to be graceful. I think one just intuitively finds a position to do that.

I have found that when I am drawing, particularly the bottom half of the line, I’m in the third position from ballet or even fifth, lifted, because that will keep me absolutely centred and stable. So one intuitively goes to such positions. I studied ballet as a child and I was very good because it matched me. It was absolutely natural and I was good at tap too because I have rhythm. To stand as I do when I am drawing is no problem – balance is my business and I do prepare for this. I wouldn’t really come to do work unless I had done my Pilates at home. I once did a film with Viviana Durante, the great dancer, with the Ballet Boyz. Viviana joked that “Linda you are more a dancer than I am”. We would stand together in the kitchen and see who could stand on one leg and one foot for the longest because balance is what I just am and really always was, even as a child.



Still from the film  
*Movements and their  
Images* by Candida  
Richardson, 2008

Frances Carey makes a particular connection to the Judson Dance Theatre. She connects it to Eva Hesse, of course. “It recalls,” she says about my work, “in my body and spatial awareness... Linda’s choreography of mark-making is informed by the training of Pilates, involving the positioning of the body and spatial awareness. It recalls some of the innovations made within modern dance in America led by Merce Cunningham and figures associated with the Judson Dance Theatre in New York in the late 50s and 60s where there was a particularly fruitful crossover between the visual and the performing arts. The vocabulary of dance was expanded to encompass the abandonment of narrative and on occasion musical accompaniment. Mundane activities and pedestrian movement organised into repeating patterns and geometric shapes became a legitimate part of choreography.”

That's it. That's what I would say is a connection. I wasn't aware of it. It just was one of these things which [said] yes, I do that. I'm not making a dance but I am dancing. Rather, the things that come to mind are Bruce Nauman's movements in the studio and his Beckett walk, of course, combined. Nauman is the one that said every movement in the studio should be graceful. I absolutely believe his practice. He doesn't fake it, he does what's necessary. If he doesn't have it, he doesn't do it.

*Do you think that your desire for getting that perfect straight line is part of this quest for harmony or balance? When you were talking about doing those first wood blocks and really struggling to get that same mark, it felt as if you were describing something akin to an obsession.*

A quest for perfection... a quest for marking things accurately. Nailing it. It has to be right. I have to say it pervades a lot of my life.

I am interested in the human being, how he or she thinks, moves, understands. I am interested in knowledge. In fact, I came across a wonderful definition by Bion, the psychoanalyst, which goes something like, "knowledge is not something we have, it is the links between our experience and all that we know."

So I think, as I walk through the studio door, I am someone who roams the fields of learning and feeds freely on all that I find there. I love nothing better than making the connections between what I find and I test those against my own experience. All of which I bring to bear every day in that studio.

So there is nothing static about my process. It is more and more and more informed, I hope, and more integrated. Its clarity and yet intuitive, that's the great thing. Never prescribed. Inscribed. The line is inscribed. It's not a sketch.

*Given your training, to what extent did the modernist ideals of harmony, balance and abstraction impact on your approach? You have noted that the rhythm comes perhaps from a deeper bodily place and might have been 'you' regardless but what has the role of that training been – is this the case?*

Well, interesting. When I arrived in Skidmore College it was the first time that the Albers' basic drawing, basic design was making its way to the East coast. Albers had been at Yale and I trained with Bob Reed who was schooled with Albers. Following the Albers' dictate was me... it matched me. There was no problem. Something Bob Reed said impacted me. What we learned was that the work was a balance between the geometric and the organic. For me, this is integral, absolutely integral.

So I had training in both: Bauhaus basic drawing, basic design and colour and also in painting, which I hated and had no affinity for. One stuck, one didn't, because of what's me. That training was crucial to my learning to build a drawing. Looking back you can see my quest for structure, quest for order – that's what I am, I'm an orderly person, I'm orderly in my being. I am order. In fact, I just went to the British Museum to see the exhibition 'Defining Beauty', about the body in classical Greece. I'm more the Kouros than the Kurai... I often think that. I have broad shoulders, I am narrow hipped, I stand in contrapposto. That's

what gives my figure its human stance. So, the Bauhaus was important, very important... it matched.

Then I went to France for my junior year and there, of course, was analytic Cubism as well as Surrealism, the automatic thing. Bringing those together took time – 11 years in the studio – to say nothing of the master's degree before.

But things take time, some things have worth and they take a while. It really set up a firm base for when the rhythm became apparent. As Winnicott said, "in that space... it's here and only here that anything original gets made." If you are not prepared to occupy that precarious space you might as well quit. It is scary space. Its performance space. It's not for the fainthearted. You take a chance.

As Apelles says, "every day leave a mark of oneself", which I think I have thought about since I was four years old... I am sure I have always felt that way; I absolutely must leave a mark of myself. This is why I keep a notebook in the studio and keep track of what happens. That freed me up, so I had my notes as well as my drawings. This links for me to something Saul Bellow wrote in 'Something to Remember Me By': "they told me that the truth of the universe is inscribed into our very bones. That the human skeleton was itself a hieroglyph."

Hieroglyph: a sacred marking. The human skeleton is a sacred marking. That is what the marks I make are. When I go through the famous museums of world cultures – the British Museum or the Met or the great museums in Berlin, for example – I look out for 'my' marks. When I was about to speak in Berlin in the Kupferstichkabinett, which had an exhibition called 'System and Sensuality', I went to the museum to prepare myself mentally and I found a few of my drawings in stone. The marks are the essential marks of man, that's what I mean by a sacred marking, a hieroglyph. When man is not thinking of making an artwork he will have, by necessity, marked himself in the way that I continue to mark myself. Nothing complicated about it, but it is profound.

So what is sacred? Well a sense of the emblem... I think that's a good word to bring in too – it is the internal rhythms and structures which reflect the movements of the stars and the universe, just as Plato spoke of. He spoke of the creation of the heavens: God wanted the heavens to be like eternity, but eternity is everlasting. So He had to make his figure moving and therefore, he created time so that the heavens move according to number and rhythm, they are a moving image of eternity. Eternity rests in unity, but time, this image we call time, it moves. And that is the moving figure assigned to me. There is also another passage from the *Theaetetus* which I also like so much which refers to a performance. He says, "What of the habit of the soul? Does not the soul acquire information and is it not preserved and made better through learning and practice which are motions, whereas at rest which is want of practice and of study it learns nothing and forgets what it has learned." Which is brilliant – "What of the habit of the soul? Isn't that preserved? Isn't that preserved and made better through learning and through practice?" I mean, I can't imagine not! I can't imagine being still... the soul will forget, my soul is a moving soul, so 'performance'? I guess I really had no choice. Mine is a universal practice, outside of any trends but I think deeply classical.

*You have talked about your 'marks' having an archaic, sacred significance whereby they are reiterated in history as a kind of universal 'mark' of human beings. Do you think it is the same*



*with the internal rhythm? Or indeed the ‘harmonies’ or ‘graces’ you have spoken of? Are you saying that these are universal? That were people to be aware of it inside themselves, it would be similar or indeed the same.*

Yes, you know Mircea Eliade, the Romanian Philosopher, says, “Every dance in time has a sacred model – look at the movement of the stars”. He goes on to say that it can be a movement in heaven, it can be movements of animals. If I am then alert to some choreographers, say Merce Cunningham, he was alert to it all. For Merce, he was looking at the movements of the animals as opposed to a geometric thing... he looked to nature. I can’t relate to that but I can relate to the turning of the heavens. I have seen, as well, viewers in my exhibitions, unconsciously, adjust their posture and unconsciously begin to sway to the work. This couldn’t be a better reaction; that my work can trigger movement, then... I know... it is having an impact on the viewer. I’m interested in how these marks and traces come into being, and how they have the power to move the viewer.

*It’s ontological?*

Yes, and there’s a wonderful quote by George Eliot. When she’s writing to a fellow writer, she says in terms of judging her own work and the impact that it’s having on its reader, “a flash conviction on the world by means of aroused sympathy, that the work will lay hold on the emotions as human experience”. So if the work can arouse sympathy, you believe. If you don’t then it’s just not working and there is something wrong with the making.

*Talking about this idea of the body and the way this connects to performance, the visceral has been outworked in very particular ways in British performance and American performance-art culture, but it seems this is somewhat opposed to what you’re talking about, which is, for want of a better word, much ‘quieter’.*

Yes. Every dance in time has a sacred model. I mean that was dance theatre, to be sure, but it’s very graceful, it’s just not aggressive, it’s absolutely not. When performance is not self-conscious, it’s great...

*When it’s not constructed...*

Yeah, but it is very often constructed. I don’t know so much about performance, but just thinking about it, too much of it is not of necessity. It’s to make a thing and then by the time you make it, the intuitive stuff is just not there. And you want a light touch, a sure touch... [in which] the lines are present. I want it to be graceful and lifted and so on, but I want it to be there, to be present, otherwise it’s just not good enough. I want it to be incised.

*You said in your notes, “and then I failed better”. What do you mean by that?*

“Fail. Fail again. Fail better.” Beckett, of course. I *used* to think that he meant one would fail, and then get it right. I am not now so sure... Just to “fail better” was as good as it got.

“What of the habit of the soul? Does not the soul acquire information and is it not preserved and made better through learning and practice which are motions, whereas at rest which is want of practice and of study it learns nothing and forgets what it has learned.” Plato, *Theaetetus*

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*Linda Karshan  
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