



## REVIEWS



Lauren Seiden,  
*Reflections in a Void*,  
2016, marble, plastic,  
water, graphite,  
6 × 52 × 52".

### Lauren Seiden

DENNY GALLERY

In the Western tradition, drawing, or the use of line as the primary vehicle for shaping form on a two-dimensional surface, has long been the scaffold on which the more rarified practices of painting, sculpture, and architecture are built. It enjoys the paradoxical privilege of being at the root of all art—and, as Michelangelo pointed out, at the root of all sciences, too—but not necessarily an end in itself. Especially since the 1960s, artists have valorized drawing by reinventing it: Projects as diverse as Sol LeWitt's wall pieces, Richard Long's walks, Kara Walker's cut silhouettes, and Matthew Barney's films have proposed new uses of line, pushing drawing in new directions.

Another push came in the form of the "Wrap Series," which artist Lauren Seiden began in 2012. Made of large sheets of stiffened rectangular paper that have been laboriously rubbed with graphite, these architectonic forms project off the wall, embodying a practice between drawing, painting, and sculpture. For the new works that were on view here (all 2016), Seiden continued applying graphite in other unconventional ways, and to a variety of unexpected surfaces, as a means of bringing drawing itself into the foreground and redefining its terms. To make "Strata Drawings," Seiden identified readymade "drawings" in nature: the dark veins of white marble slabs, which she traced over in pencil. The process is simultaneously reverent and irreverent toward marble as a material and drawing itself, which here gains a new weight and gravitas while remaining superficial or supplemental. The same tension is found in *The Future Is Lost in Yesterday's News*, a stack of newspapers covered with graphite that cloaks the lines of printed

language with monochromatic abstraction. The resulting obelisk renders history both material and obscure, and prompts us to reconsider the possibilities, and limits, of drawing as a way of knowing the world. For other works in the show, Seiden added graphite to honeycomb metal sheets and string curtains, which are themselves "drawings" of lines in space. The end results were reflexive drawings of lines on lines, set against the ground of the gallery's white walls.

Collectively, these works evince that drawing is not so much the medium of Seiden's art as its "technical support," a term put forward by Rosalind Krauss to succeed the exhausted modernist notion of the specific medium. The support is not a material substrate but rather a cultural form that provides a system or set of rules for an artist's practice. Thus, the support of Ed Ruscha's work is the automobile, while the support of William Kentridge's work is animation. Rather than view the support as merely restrictive, Krauss suggests that it does for the artist what the walls of a pool do for a swimmer: The support is the framework that both delimits the artist's practice and propels the artist forward as she pushes off against it. The metaphor becomes literal in Seiden's *Reflections in a Void*, in which a pool of water, framed by marble, is dusted with graphite powder. In accordance with the laws of nature, the powder gathers into marbled patterns that float on the water and shift in response to the local environment (the post-Minimalist works of Hans Haacke and Eva Hesse are obliquely invoked, if not negotiated head-on, throughout the show). Inevitably, the graphite sinks into and clouds the water, rendering drawing's supposedly transparent surfaces opaque. At the same time, the cloudy water pulls drawing down into the depths of three-dimensionality, directly abutting the space of our lived reality—hence, the siting of this work on the horizontal plane of the floor, in opposition to the sublimated verticality of the picture plane. As represented by *Reflections in a Void*, Seiden's recent art uses the language of drawing as a framework for opening it to process, time, and history, rendering it urgent and consequential. This is drawing in four dimensions.

—Tina Rivers Ryan