

# Out of Line • FashCam

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**Oakville Galleries: Out of Line, curated by the bright and energetic duo Matthew Hyland and Jon Davies, 21st June-5th September, 2015, assures us that Canadian artists will contribute to pushing the medium in now hitherto unknown and aesthetically invigorating directions.**



Kelly Wallace, *Medium Rare*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto

The show was spread across two very different, but equally appealing spaces. First, several works were ensconced in the pastoral environs of the Gairloch house. The rooms of the storied, historic landmark have a warm intimate feel, wonderfully conducive to viewing the works on display. Afterwards, we took a short trip down Lakeshore road to Centennial Square where a dozen more works were more conventionally hung in the institutional exhibition space of Oakville's Central Library. Spreading the exhibition across two spaces not only suggested how works are received in different settings and spaces, but also provided the viewer with a temporary pause to consider and think about the work one had just viewed. We visited the exhibition several times over the course of the summer. Here is our account of the show:

*Out of Line* reveals a variegated stylistic engagement with the medium of drawing by a selection of premiere Canadian artists. As with most of our ideas about art, our conception of the drawing medium was bequeathed to us by the Renaissance. Fundamentally, drawing signifies a human impulse towards mark making and, within the practice of art, the use of line to make a picture. It was during that efflorescence of formalized art making that

drawing was used as one of the deferred stages for making easel paintings. Easel painting as we commonly understand it only emerged as a distinct artistic form during the Renaissance. During this era, drawing was relegated to an inferior status, enlisted as part of the preparatory stages in generating fully realized works of art. But it is precisely that drawing is thought of as part of the *process* involved in artistic creation that potentially lends the medium a greater spontaneity and dynamism, and conceptually, greater volatility.

Drawing was also associated with observational exactitude as European artists were trained to produce sketches from nature and studies of the human form. Both Albrecht Dürer and Rembrandt are two classical artists particularly remembered for their exquisite draftsmanship. We should also recall that before the advent of photography, and for sometime after, the important documentary role drawing played in news reportage and illustrated journals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Pencils developed early in the nineteenth century, and Ingres and others produced highly finished portrait drawings with the new tool. It was precisely during the nineteenth century that artists such as Delacroix produced drawings as finished works of art. With the Impressionist impulse to paint directly on canvas without the need for deferred stages of execution, drawing was properly freed as a more autonomous medium. Though our conception of the medium's purity can be traced at least as far back as the Renaissance, it really shifts into high gear with modernism. With Greenbergian modernism we have the fullest expression of media purity: the conception that each media has its own sphere of competency and expertise.

But the impulse to draw far predates that of painting. Practically, drawing allows for greater rapidity in the means of using line to sketch impressions. Chalk, ink, crayon, graphite and charcoal are media we usually associate with drawing. And conceptually, drawing suggests a more primordial connection between the mind and the hand. Whereas the painter's hand must return to the palette between strokes and daubs, the draughtsman may employ line more or less continuously, suggesting an immediate connection between eye and mind.

It is this history of technique and concept of medium specificity that the exhibit *Out of Line* submits to critical examination. As the rebellious title suggests, the exhibit underscores the traditional importance of line in drawing as well as suggesting a transgression of strict disciplinary boundaries, bringing drawing out into an "expanded field."

The first image that greets the viewer in the Gairloch House is *Drapes* by the Toronto based artist Luke Painter. Painter's modestly sized picture features virtuosic technique in depicting a curtain, vertically segmented into five parts, with each section featuring a different art deco pattern drawn from historical sources between the first two World Wars. Painter's picture highlights the use of line and drawing in decorative pattern making, but more importantly, the piece emphasizes drawing as a medium for simulation and dissimulation. Here the medium is virtuosically employed in the service of rich pictorial effects and illusionism. Drawing here is successful insofar as it simulates the illusion of cloth, floor and variegated patterns and surfaces. The patterns are further animated by the rectilinear pleating of the curtain that creates a rhythmic effect as we horizontally scan the picture's planar surfaces. Painter's astute use of color — note how the complementaries green and red create an optical buzz across different segments of the curtain — remind us that "drawing" need not always be simply shades of charcoal, graphite greys and white, but can shimmer with color. The tiled floor produces a shallow stage for the image, further reinforcing the use of line as an underlying armature to organize perspectival space in Western picture making. Here the Albertian trope of painting-as-window-onto-the-world is playfully displaced by the drapes that deny, instead of frame, our view into depth. The picture is freighted with connotations and serves as an impressive emblem to open the show.





### Drawing in Canada

As we continue to an adjacent room, the exhibition offers quite a different example of the drawing medium. Artist Howie Tsui's *Of Malingerers, Skulkers and Dupes* (2012) boldly throws drawing into the "expanded field" of the beholder's physical space. Suspended from the ceiling of a well-lit room are five deerskin parchments with various illustrations on one side. Tsui uses acrylic ink to illustrate scenes of soldiers from the War of 1812 maiming themselves in order to avoid serving on the battlefield. The artist employs a cartoonish drawing idiom reminiscent of nineteenth century caricatural illustrations. But in Tsui's work the support itself is presented as an object for consideration, and points to the multi-modal forms in which drawings may take shape. Here, the deer parchment alludes to historical periods where paper was just one of several media associated with drawing, and that the support itself, may greatly determine how the artist's line is perceived. Naturally occurring tears and holes in the deerskin create fissures and negative space when viewing the illustrations. Moreover, by hanging Tsui's artwork, the parchments become a sculptural object the viewer can freely circumambulate and inspect. The relation between Tsui's work and Eva Hesse's post minimalist sculpture *Contingent* (1969), made out of cheesecloth, latex and fiberglass are striking both in their similarities and differences. And the importance of drawing to Hesse's practice was examined in 2006 at the [Walker Art Museum](#).







The medium of sculpture is literally embodied in the next room where a series of drawings illustrate the sculptural process. Zin Taylor's *The Story of Stripes and Dots* provides us with three drawings using graphite on paper. Abstract forms of squiggly lines and dots, document the artist's process in envisioning the sculptural work we see on view. The sculpture, entitled *A Structure Choreographed to Filter a Room (Fingers Pulled from the Sea and Patterns), 2<sup>nd</sup> arrangement* is made out of plaster and acrylic paint. It embodies the squiggly lines and dots and demonstrates how "line" can be three-dimensionalized and inhabit our physical space. Here both an expanded definition of the medium destabilizes easy categories such as "sculpture" or "drawing," but also grants us the valuable experience of witnessing how a work of art is envisioned from idea to inception. There are, of course, gaps in this information (the drawings are not, after all, strict blueprints for the execution of the work) and so the viewer must conjecture and playfully hypothesize the steps the artist took between the drawings we examine and the sculpture on view.











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## Untitled

Across this piece hangs an astoundingly intricate work by London, Ontario artist Kim Moodie, entitled *Float Island* (2011). From afar the work appears monolithic, a huge granite surfaced rectangular monochrome extending on its side. But as we bridge the distance its surface shimmers and we realize *Float Island* is in fact a meticulously detailed drawing containing strange, almost phantasmagoric images, motifs and patterns nested within a larger framework. This work raises the question of the ideal distance to view a work of art, in this case an elaborately rendered drawing that reveals different effects dependent on one's vantage or view. One marvels at the exhaustive precision required to visualize such a beautifully intricate drawing. Moodie's work raises also the subject of intimacy and fantasy. We think of the medium as predisposed to a certain degree of personal subjectivity as the artist doodles or sketches alone creating fanciful worlds, at times only for himself.







On an adjacent wall a picture with social reverberations asserts itself. The drawing by Toronto-based artist Jean-Paul

Kelly depicts the type of simple illustration of a generic looking suburban home one might receive as a grade-school student to color in the blank spaces. The flat planar style is highly reminiscent of such childhood images. I remember receiving these types of coloring exercises myself and fantasizing what life would be like living in such a home, or who the inhabitants might be. But Kelly has painted in plywood boarding that blocks the windows and denies us visual access into the home. The almost excessive expanse of blank space above the image creates a vertical asymmetry. But the historical specificity of this image, created in 2008, clearly indicates the foreclosure of homes, the death of the proverbial American dream, due to the sub-prime mortgage crises in the United States.





Less successful I think is a drawing beside Kelly's works — a collaboration between Cape Dorset-based artist Shuvinai Ashoona and Toronto's Shary Boyle —called *Universal Cobra Pussy* (2011). The picture depicts narwhals and mermaids on the ice, and above them we see an inverted arctic landscape. As usual with imagistic forms of



surrealism, the picture feels clichéd and maintains the most traditional compositional techniques, despite its self-avowed goal, expressed by the title, to shock or unsettle conventional expectations. The desire to create a solipsistic scene that somehow speaks a universal truth is a failure. Also perplexing are a series of rainbow patterned crayon marks on the walls of this room. At first I thought they were children's marks left from some youth program that might have occurred in the gallery space. But then I saw the didactic label informing that these were drawings by Derek Sullivan, the whole arrangement, entitled "A Piece of Glass" (2015) and were intended to replicate the refraction of light shining on the walls through a glass prism. Illusionistically, these marks are unconvincing, and as a graphic pattern they are uninteresting. The piece provides momentary puzzlement and that is all. I admit, I am unfamiliar with Sullivan's work, and the next show at the Oakville Galleries will feature Derek Sullivan's broader corpus, so I look forward to reassessing this artist more thoughtfully at a future date.



In the final room of the Gairloch house lies one of my favorite works in the exhibition: Krista Buecking's series of three images entitled "Matters of Fact," with subtitles such as "codified form A". The works are intriguing on several

levels. First, they suggest how “line” as such can become codified, reified and commodified, or suggestive of particular *effects* within the broader cultural sphere. Take “codified form A” that depicts a jagged yellow graph line on the plexiglass surface of the image. The line alone against a gradated blue field resembles a stock market fluctuation, but then could just as well be the read out of a heart rate or pulse monitor in a hospital. The ambiguity between the fluctuations of one’s heart rate and corresponding movements in the market is frighteningly suggestive. But there is more to this image. The background “screen” or field is delicately and carefully rendered with pencil crayons to simulate the gradients of a computer screen. Alongside it, “codified form B” is similarly enigmatic as it depicts unfamiliar ideograms that follow a trajectory of collapse and derangement: a mysterious sign no longer capable of signifying. I think Buecking’s drawings could have done without the sound accompaniment — a news jingle and several other sonic cues are projected from a speaker in the room. The sound component feels forced and I would have liked to have experienced the images on their own terms, a sentiment belying perhaps, my own prejudice towards medium purity no doubt.



As we shift locales, we find the Centennial Square location houses some of the more accomplished and conceptually challenging pieces in the show. Here, contemporary strategies from the neoavantgarde push, stretch, and bend our definitions of the drawing medium into unstable artistic categories. But the more vanguard pieces are hung alongside others that display accomplished pictorial skill.

The role played by drawing within the neoavantgarde of the 1950s and 60s is best encapsulated in a work such as Robert Rauschenberg’s *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953). In a famous gesture (or anti-gesture), the American neo-Dadaist painter took a “found art object,” a drawing he received from the great Abstract Expressionist, Willem de Kooning, and in an act of negation effaced the complex image with a rubber eraser. The resultant work, in its totality a monochrome with ghostly traces of the eraser’s smudges, is a powerful act of refusal against the romantic conceptions of authorship and artistic genius that enfranchised advanced post-War American painting. While such



iconoclastic gestures were shocking and subversive during the postwar period, they have more recently become institutionalized within [the Academy](#).

*Out of Line* clearly exhibits how those strategies that the art historian Yve-Alain Bois calls practices of “non-compositionality” are thoroughly conventional in contemporary art practice. Strategies of non-compositionality include the use of the readymade, the monochrome, the grid, seriality and repetition, chance and aleatoric practices as well as indexical marks and imprints, and automatism. These all seek to undermine and circumvent traditional notions of figure/ground, “pictorial beauty”, “relational composition” and thus indirectly critique the ideological assumptions that have traditionally supported them. For if the artist-as-subject is always enmeshed, and thus subjugated to a larger cultural and ideological matrix from which she cannot escape, then practices outside of one’s intentionality become the only means to thwart this formal and ideological subjection. Watch Rauschenberg himself explain how his love for drawing informed the conception of the work.



Erased de Kooning Drawing – Robert Rauschenberg, (1953)

For example, take, Thérèse Mastroiacovo's piece *Untitled* (John Baldessari, 1972), (2002), where the artist takes a lithograph entitled *I will not make any more boring art* (1972) in which Baldessari repeats the phrase in a format that

recalls a student who has been punished for misbehavior. Mastroiacovo has scanned, printed and photocopied the original lithograph but has erased the word “boring” so the text now reads “I will not make anymore ... art.” She has then photocopied this hundreds of times and the stacked papers are presented on a simple table as a piece of meta-conceptual art. The artist takes the found object or artwork, produces an indexical work by photocopying it repeatedly, submits it to selective negation and erasure, and presents it in a serialized format that intensifies the negations: several strategies of non-compositionality, all check.



Another feature of the artwork is that unlike any of the other works in the exhibition, *Untitled* (John Baldessari 1972) is displayed horizontally on a table, as *something to be read*. Not only does this secure the connection between writing and drawing, it also alludes, importantly, to the notion of the “flatbed” work of art. It was the art-critic Leo Steinberg who first remarked on this shift from vertical orientation towards horizontality in his landmark work of criticism *Other Criteria* (1972): “I borrow the term from the flatbed printing press—‘a horizontal bed on which a horizontal printing surface rests’ (Webster). And I propose to use the word to describe the characteristic picture plane of the 1960s—a pictorial surface whose angulation with respect to the human posture is the precondition of its changed content.”

In the works of Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, even Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland and others, Steinberg provided a retrospective reading of Greenbergian modernism that emphasized the cognitive and conceptual dimensions of works of art as artifacts to be “read” and thought about, over and above their purely visual or illusionistic appeals. The flatbed picture plane is not so much an historic emergence in the field of artmaking as it is a shift in one’s conceptual approach to considering works of art. This shift would presage the important developments of conceptual art and this influence is clearly apparent in ambitious Canadian artists even today.

In the same room as Mastroiacovo’s work, we can also see Tammi Campbell’s minimalist homage to another



celebrated hero of the avant-garde, the Canadian painter Agnes Martin, simply entitled, *Dear Agnes* (September 2014: #01-28) (2014). Campbell, a Saskatoon-based artist, began each day by carefully drawing small grid structures enlisting the horizontal and vertical pencil-edge line.

Saskatchewan-born Martin had developed her signature grid motif at the age of forty-five in New York City while maintaining relationships with some of the greats in advanced American painting. Martin dined daily with Ellsworth Kelly, and maintained friendships with Jasper Johns, Robert Indiana and Ad Reinhardt. An elegantly comprehensive [review by Artforum's Prudence Peiffer](#) provides a snapshot glimpse of Martin's impressive life and temperament.

Note how Campbell's production is serialized, predetermined by the days of the month. And note too, how the artist demonstrates the rich variation possible when one plumbs the depths of a single pictorial structure. The austere set of compositions, produced with the minimalist means: of graphite on folded Japanese paper, display a beautiful and elegant simplicity. The true "grid" of course functions as both an indexical mark in that it maps the field onto which it is applied, and moreover, every point is predetermined by every other and leaves little space for the artist's subjective choice or intentionality.

Similarly employing strategies of serial form, the readymade, and an emphasis on "process" is Ken Nicol's multi-media piece, *Flogging a Dead Horse* (2014). The work is ruthless in its simplicity. Nicol took a mass made office pen and made small tally marks across sheets of paper until the ink ran out. The pen is displayed on a plinth beside the framed sheets of paper as an object for contemplation in its own rite. The work simultaneously suggests a certain neurosis in this act of compulsive repetition while recalling the trope of the readymade. Moreover, we can actually trace the artist's process in making the work. The work's third panel only displays scratches as the pen has run completely dry. While the different works displayed in this room are informed by a kind of minimalist "anti-aesthetic," they also provide the viewer with another way of thinking about the medium of drawing and how it has been integrated into recent vanguard aesthetics.



Also referencing the flatbed in another part of the same gallery space is Jennifer Rose Sciarrino's *Rhomboid Floor* (2011) in which the artist uses graphite, gesso and steel on board to meticulously render the type of concrete floor we find in industrial and communal spaces such as train stations, schools, and in this case, the floor of the artist's own studio. This displacement from floor to wall effects a similar inversion in our own perceptual orientation. The beholder may look across at the tiny patterns of angular shapes and tesserae that comprise the visual texture of the floor surface erect and from an unusual perspective. Knowing whether this visual pattern was drawn to scale, would help us understand how earnestly Sciarrino employs the category of the "index." But the work has several more ambitious associations. Not only is *Rhomboid Floor* an "allover" composition, but through mimicking an industrial, mass produced surface to reference the flatbed space of Pollock, supplanting gestural facture with geometric repetition, it also recalls the "art brut" of Dubuffet, and even further, implies a certain debasement of the drawing medium itself in relation to the elevated status of painting. I particularly liked this work for these sophisticated associations, but also because it reminded me of those long periods of waiting and boredom, whether at school, or standing for the subway or train to arrive, when one gazed down at such a similar site, lost in thought or imagination, or just out of pure perceptual interest.





Several of the works in the Oakville public library space employ the medium of drawing towards more traditional notions of pictorial beauty, personal fantasy, and even spectacularization. I was taken with a picture that enlists the painting-as-window motif to depict a landscape that, despite its modesty of technique, is both eloquent and profound: Itee Pootoogook's *Kitchen Window* (2010), a drawing executed on black paper with pencil and pencil crayon.

The work is made all the more melancholic when we learn that Pootoogook, an artist of Inuit descent, succumbed to Cancer in 2014. In this work, the Cape Dorset artist depicts a snowy, northern landscape at daylight as seen through a kitchen window. The basic interior of the dark kitchen is rendered with a great specificity of place even though the details are spare and minimal. Pootoogook creates highly subtle harmonies of grey and brown and green with the use of the pencil crayon medium. Take the simplified and charming little detail of the plastic bottle of green dishwashing liquid perched above the sink that possesses a truly formal and sculptural quality. The window motif as an internal framing device onto the landscape and the frontality of presentation recalls the work of other Canadian artists such as Christopher Pratt and Alex Colville — but Pootoogook's work is entirely his own. Moreover, the work participates in the tradition of what University of Toronto film scholar Bart Testa cites as the "garrison mentality" in depicting the Canadian landscape. In his book *Spirit in the Landscape* (1989), Testa examines how in Canadian landscape painting, literature, and experimental cinema, the threatening nature of the Canadian landscape is often mediated through the safe intimacy of a human enclosure.



A stand out work from the show is Alison Norlen's *Parachute Drop* (2012). Norlen, a Saskatoon-based artist, frequently finds inspiration in the architecture of theme parks, fairground attractions, suburban malls and abandoned construction sites — spaces and structures that lend themselves to a certain postmodern notion of spectacle and

commodification. But they are also spaces of personal memory, unfulfilled aspirations, and fantasy. In *Parachute Drop*, Norlen employs a sophisticated admixture and layering of chalk, pastel, charcoal, pen and water-based paint on a grand scale to render an enigmatic structure that looks at once like an electrical tower as much as it could be an abandoned fairground attraction. It is almost impossible to disaggregate or identify these different “drawing” media in Norlen’s piece.





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The work's shimmering, vertically striated surface dissolves and disintegrates, as it simultaneously coheres before our eyes. The artist uses drawing, and an incredibly sophisticated vocabulary of line, almost *against drawing itself* so as to simulate painting. The motif then seems fugitive and contingent, even though it represents a solid, large-scale architectural form. Indeed, if we were to read the surface markings that lie on top of, or in front of the central structure, they could be understood as something like a hail storm or a waterfall that obscures our view. But the effect of Norlen's drawing is also to aggressively assert the surface qualities of the picture plane and encourage a sense of a dedifferentiated whole, and with its different shades of blue, a sense, also, of the oceanic. Here is Norlen talking about the centrality of drawing to her practice on the occasion of a sculptural installation in 2013 at the Mendel Gallery in Saskatoon:

Norlen's coloristic effects and attempt at dissimulating line as painting in *Parachute Drop* unsettles the Renaissance idea of the *paragone* and the difference between *disegno* (design or drawing) and *colore* (the more painterly effects characteristic of *cinquecento* Venetian painting). In Florence, drawing was regarded as the unifying force behind all artistic practice, emphasizing design and the artist's "conception" of the work. It was believed drawings revealed the inner workings of the artist's mind. In this view, drawing becomes a powerfully circumscribing force, enforcing notions of good form and pictorial hierarchy. But many of the works in *Out of Line* circumvent intentional pictorial control or subjectivity. This is most visually apparent in the few works from the show that employ an automatist idiom. The suggestively titled *Incarcerate* (2014) in conte and oil pastel, by Toronto-based Jamie Angelopoulos displays a taut sense of surface tension through the use of broad bands of line across the surface of the paper. While not an automatist drawing, the work displays a gestural alloverness and one wonders if the incarceration that is taking place is that of the movement of lines within the frame. Angelopoulos' work displays a strong sense of merging color with line to effect a collapse of figure and ground. As our eye follows the thickly articulated bands and how they almost imperceptibly change hues from blue to black, our gaze too, becomes imprisoned within the nested structures of the image.





Beside this piece is hung Ed Pien's *Angels of Mercy* (2011). Pien uses a nested automatist line reminiscent of a more procedural form of surrealism as found in the works of André Masson, but the smudges, thick black coils, and redirections of his line submit the automatist line to further abjection. His gestural marks are never completely abstract, but working in ink and gouache, Pien attempts to expand figuration through the emergence of monstrous creatures and motifs.



I was surprised that more examples of Surrealist drawing did not appear in the show. For example, techniques of *frottage* where images can be made by rubbing graphite on paper directly in contact with different sorts of surfaces seemed notably absent. Or even *grattage*, as a form of drawing directly on wet painted surfaces, a technique that further destabilizes the binary painting/drawing. This is not a critique of this incredibly comprehensive and brilliantly curated show, but simply an interesting and conspicuous absence. Has the influence of surrealism waned in contemporary Canadian art?

While not included in the exhibition, Samantha Noseworthy, an emerging young artist from the Maritimes (based in Toronto) deserves mention in this survey of contemporary Canadian drawing. In her aptly titled, “Tunnel Vision” series of drawings, Noseworthy recasts and revivifies the automatist line in fresh and intriguing directions. In a collection of eighty pieces, Noseworthy’s fluid sense of line recalls the free line drawings of Eva Hesse after Leonardo, even as the artist introduces a palpable sense of frission, frustration, and even pure *jouissance* to her all-over compositional technique and through a repetition and accretion of forms. Not only is the entire set of images an experiment in serialized form, but each of Noseworthy’s drawings reveal an interest in the accumulation of visual motifs that achieve a more introspective and even obsessive quality.

What fascinates me about these images is not only the allusiveness of the figures, but the allusiveness of the cursive, undulating line itself, ultimately always abridged and broken at unrequited junctures. Cartoons, video game motifs, pop art imagery drawn from comics populate these works, but never through any direct citation or imitation as far as I can tell. At times I feel I recognize where a particular cross-hatching line motif might come from, a particular mushroom looks like it was sourced from a Nintendo 64 game or an animal face from a television show of a bygone era, but these references never finally cohere specifically enough for me to concretely identify.

What makes this play with uncertainty particularly sophisticated is that Noseworthy understands the potential for visual polysemy available in the descriptive line. Just as in a work of analytic cubism a line may articulate both the



side of a table and a trompe l'oeil violin, Noseworthy uses an economy of line to produce a nested gestalt switch of figures. Some of the most compelling imagery occurs at the margins of the pictures. Take the drawing *Bunny Mooning*, where in the upper right corner we find a simple pencil drawing of a deranged “Felix the Cat” type figure. As we follow the cursive line that economically describes a torso it ends in a sort of paw that itself appears to have face-like properties. Throughout the piece we find such fragments of animal imagery or a scribbly line that could represent scratch-marks or the work of rapacious claws. That an exaggerated, and to my mind obscene, red heart motif unifies the composition, is undermined of any sentimentality when we consider the sprinkling of small red circles across the paper that appear more like drops of blood than the cherries they seem to depict.



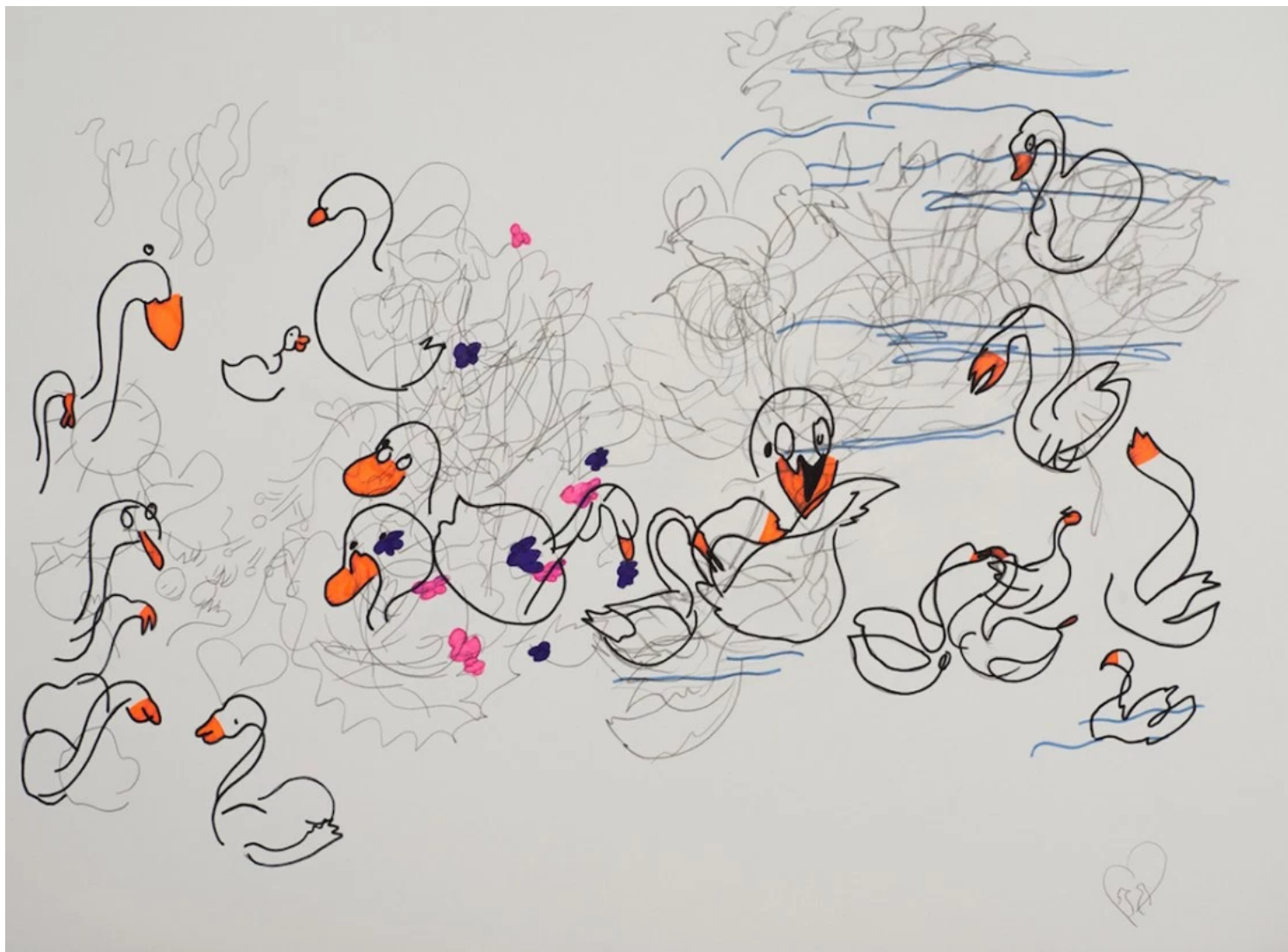
Bunny Mooning (2014), Sam Noseworthy

Look at the similarly strange figure in pencil at the upper left part of the second image that forms part of a clover, but also a disembodied eye that gazes over the phallic protuberances of noses and hands.



Or take the alternatively phallic/vaginal motif of the suggestively titled *Swan Song* where the bright orange beaks and S-curve necks create an oscillating rhythm across the image. Note how the horizontal undulations of the blue lines simultaneously describe water and thus space, but in the upper register cancel out any such mimetic suggestion. The image's art historical allusiveness gains force when we connect the title and the more aggressive, graffiti like and violent automatist scribbles to a precedent such as Cy Twombly's *Leda and the Swan* (1962). Twombly's image depicts with great pictorial and gestural violence the rape of Leda by the incarnation of the Greek god Zeus in the form of a Swan, and this myth was a favorite motif of Italian mannerist artists.







This raises an interesting possibility: if automatism is understood as a kind of desublimation of psychic and sexual forces, then Noseworthy's work suggests a colonization of the unconscious by the mass media imagery we are subjected to as children and teens. And in Noseworthy's drawings this return of the repressed is both commodified and historically specific as if these works testify visually and viscerally to the artist's internalization of oppression. Such an operation was suggested by artist Roy Lichtenstein in a transitional moment where the gestural automatism of Abstract Expressionism became a source for unearthing popular imagery as evinced by the drawing studies for *Donald Duck* (1958).





Donald Duck by Roy Lichtenstein



That we end this review by moving out of *Out of Line*, is salutary and very much in spirit with the exhibition. Through brilliant curatorial skill, Matthew Hyland and Jon Davies robustly profile the art historical, pictorial and conceptual engagements with the drawing medium by today's Canadian artists. And there were many other compelling works included in the show. But the last image I will mention, a sort of *pièce de résistance* or emblem for the entire exhibition combines both technical virtuosity with sophisticated conceptual acumen –the mark of something like a true “masterpiece”. Kelly Wallace's breathtaking *Medium Rare* (2014) provides us with a good bookend from where we began this review. Composed in a spirit of true immediacy, without preparatory sketches, but through a labour intensive process enlisting short vertical lines that took hundreds of hours of work, *Medium Rare* is an allover, horizontal expanse composed of flat, enigmatic shapes that recall broad leaves or crystalline structures or drapes all at once. Wallace's sense of both intimating pictorial space, tone and even affect through the most minimalist means produces a sensational result. Despite the “death of the author/artist,” drawing as a medium is clearly still very much alive. And what ever form the medium takes in this post-historical art scene, we can be assured that Canadian artists will contribute to pushing the medium in now hitherto unknown and aesthetically invigorating directions.





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Moving beyond the conventions of simple journalistic criticism, Mr. Dhir delivers two bi-monthly columns, on art and film, under the umbrella Meraj Dhir’s REVIEW, exploring the historical, political, economic, and most centrally, the aesthetic contexts within which visual artworks are produced, distributed and appreciated. His extensive knowledgebase in art history and film studies coupled with his fluid public speaking and on camera presence allows him incredible versatility in his journalistic approach.

