

## **Drawing: The new economy of scale**

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### **Artists find drawing is the new economy of scale**

**By Abby Luby**

Special Correspondent

Art often reflects the times and for some artists the current recession is lending to a sense of simplicity. Creating work with the bare minimum of paper and pencil in the singly executed process of drawing is the theme of the upcoming show, "LAA Draws," at the Loft Artists Association in Stamford.

Works in this show are about the straight-forward aesthetic of putting a mark on paper, the tactile immediacy of various speeds and pressures of graphite moving on a surface. There's no easel, no vast array of paint tubes or required studio environments. Drawing can be done anywhere, any time.

LAA member Susan McCaslin says drawing and sketching have a history of being minimal. "If you think back to the old masters like Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, they would do sketches for paintings, before the extra layers of oils and color. In a way, drawing is what's happening now with the economy and how we're getting down to bare bones and cutting back to what you really need."

Because the artist's sketchpad is generally accessible and easy to carry around, it becomes the recipient of ideas and images outside the studio. LAA artist and exhibit coordinator Margaret Tsirantonakis' pieces in the show are from her sketch book and are titled "Yale & Towne," two simple but lyrically lined drawings of buildings before they were demolished.

"I always have a sketch looking at the old buildings at Yale and Towne and wanted to draw something before it was gone."

Tsirantonakis explains that drawing outside the studio is a direct response to what she is seeing. "You have to do it quickly and it's all about the mark making -- what is a squiggly line, how the weight of the mark makes light or dark. It's also a way of seeing -- it makes me see more carefully."

Not all drawings in the show are about spontaneity, however. "Aya -- Co Existence," a work by Donna Hargrove, is the result of an artistic progression. Hargrove used abstracted fragments of African masks that she cut and pasted onto a drawing of a religious symbol from Ghana known as "Aya," meaning perseverance.

"I started drawing African masks four or five years ago and parlayed that into painting," she says. "This show is giving me an opportunity to go back and make this work much more abstract than something I would normally do in pencil. It's completely different."

LAA member Cate Leach finds that working with pencil brings out certain spatial elements in her work "Fragments," a grid of 20 circles of abstract lines, plays on positive and negative space.

"I used India ink on paper and I cut the paper, assembled it and used pencil to enhance the form," she says. "You can understand so much about how to make a form by drawing in a tiny area and then apply it to a larger painting." Leach says that drawing allows for little or no distractions because color, the wetness or drying of paint are not concerns.

Coinciding with "LAA Draws!" is "Draw On!" a free program that invites people to try their own hand at sketching. The original "Draw On!" was started by the Aldrich Museum in Ridgefield in 2006. LAA is running its own version concurrent with similar, celebratory drawing programs at the Aldrich and other organizations around Connecticut. On Saturdays, March 28 and April 4, LAA will plaster its walls with blank paper and a large supply of pencils for art patrons of any age who are freshly inspired by the LAA show. Costumed actors will be on hand to pose on request as the "Model Drawing" part of the program. "Draw Cards" is geared to youngsters to create trading cards, tarot or art cards from small pieces of card stock.

"We are also thinking about community and everyone pulling together," says McCaslin about the "Draw On!" events at LAA. "Mentoring is a big thing here and we want to invite everyone into our building to work with us, including children and families."

Hargrove, who says drawing often is a solitary experience, is equally excited about the "Draw On" part of the show. "I am looking forward to participating and working with other people and working on the paper pasted along the walls. I hope a lot of kids come out for this. It's something different."

"LAA Draws!" opens Friday and runs through April 26 at the Loft Artists Association, 845 Canal St., Stamford. "Draw On!" will take place at the studio Saturdays, March 28 and April 4, 2-5 p.m. Call 323-4153 or visit [www.loftartists.com/](http://www.loftartists.com/).

Participating artists Liz Squillace, Bridgeport cici artist, Stamford Elaine Best, Stamford Francine Funke, Stamford Renee Kahn, Stamford Claire Koch, Stamford Mary Louise Long, Stamford Lina Morielli, Stamford Wendy Ohlson, Stamford Anne Salthouse, Stamford Alissa Siegal, Stamford Margaret Tsirantonakis, Stamford Lisa Hillman, Darien Cate Leach, Darien Susan McCaslin, Darien Diane Weeks, Darien Maura Shapiro, Greenwich Sandy Garnett, Norwalk Donna Hargrove, Norwalk Jane Petrushka, New Rochelle, N.Y. Tina Rohrer, Pound Ridge, N.Y. Lynda Carroll, Wilton