

For Immediate Release  
April 2007

**SPECIAL EXHIBITION ORGANIZED BY YALE STUDENTS OFFERS MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF THE LINE IN DRAWING**

*What Is a Line? Drawings from the Collection*

May 1–July 22, 2007

*What Is a Line?*, a special exhibition on view in the Yale University Art Gallery's recently renovated Louis Kahn building, presents more than sixty drawings that reveal the variety of ways in which artists have defined, challenged, and reflected upon the role of the line in drawing. A highlight of the exhibition, which includes work by fifty-three artists, including Carl Andre, Trisha Brown, Philip Guston, and Agnes

Martin, among others, is an original wall drawing by Sol LeWitt, specially loaned by the artist.

*What Is a Line?* is being organized by a curatorial team of Yale students who are responsible for all aspects of the project, including exhibition design and interpretive materials, as well as installation of Mr. LeWitt's drawing.

Organized thematically, *What Is a Line?* is divided into seven sections, each of which offers an answer to the broad question posed by the exhibition title. The first section, called "Space and Contour," considers traditional challenges related to how best to create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. Not surprisingly, artists have found unexpected, nontraditional solutions to the problem. Ellsworth Kelly's *Magnolia* (1966) and Henry Elinson's *Untitled* (1975) show the range of possibilities, as Kelly's simple pencil outlines of a flower leave the viewer's eye to complete volume, while Elinson uses felt-tip pen to express the topography of an abstract,



Carl Andre, *PLAN from Yucatan*, 1972. Typewriting in red and black ink, 11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm). Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of Werner H. and Sarah-Anne Kramarsky

seemingly mathematical shape. Other sections take on the constraints of drawing. "Frame and Boundary," for example, explores the limitations presented by the four edges of a piece of paper, each in itself an immovable line. Jo Baer repeats the borderlines of the page in the drawing *Agent* (1962), while in *May 13th, 2001* (2001), Julia Mangold similarly mimics the effect of the border.

The artists represented in "Text" pay homage to the complex connection between writing and drawing and also explore the tension between these two concepts: Where, for example, does writing end and drawing begin? Some artists, such as Cy Twombly, refuse to make the distinction, while others use line to explore or comment on texts. Jay Kelly, for example, uses short vertical lines to suggest the barcode – a different kind of text. In the drawings on view in "Grids and Networks," line is used as both a mechanical,

systematized form of organization and as a more flexible network showing the unique touch of the human hand. Philip Guston's *Untitled* (1951), in brush and black ink, suggests both structured grid and the unstructured motion of the artist's hand. Other sections of the exhibition include "Layer," "Cuts, Impressions, and Incisions," and "Gesture."

Mr. LeWitt's wall drawing underscores the diversity of effects possible when an artist stretches a line to its naturally expansive conclusion. The instructions for the drawing are simple: "131 lines of random length and direction, each drawn from the end of a previous line. They may cross." The possibilities, however, are endless, teasing chaos out of structure.

The curatorial team of Yale students worked under the direction of Anna Hammond, Deputy Director for Education, Programs, and Public Affairs, and Pamela Franks, Curator of Academic Initiatives, both of the Yale University Art Gallery, as well as Christine Mehring, Assistant Professor of the History of Art at Yale.

### **Exhibition Support**

This exhibition is made possible by the Florence B. Selden Fund, and the Jane and Gerald Katcher and the Nolen-Bradley Family Funds for Education, with additional support provided by Drs. Joseph L. Koerner, B.A. 1980, and Margaret L. Koster, and by Carol and Sol LeWitt in memory of Robert Rosenblum.

### **Related Programming**

Exhibition talks by the student-curators take place on Wednesdays, May 23, June 6, and June 27, at 12:20 PM. Free and open to the public.

### **Yale University Art Gallery**

Founded in 1832, when patriot-artist John Trumbull donated to Yale College more than one hundred of his paintings, the Yale University Art Gallery is the oldest college art museum in the United States. Today, the Gallery's encyclopedic collections number more than 185,000 objects ranging in date from ancient times to the present day. These holdings comprise a world-renowned collection of American paintings and decorative arts; outstanding collections of Greek and Roman art, including the artifacts excavated at the ancient Roman city of Dura-Europos; the Jarves, Griggs, and Rabinowitz Collections of early Italian paintings; European, Asian, and African art from diverse cultures, including more than five hundred African objects donated to the Gallery by the late Charles Benenson; art of the ancient Americas; the Société Anonyme Collection of early twentieth-century European and American art; and Impressionist, modern, and contemporary works. The Gallery is both a collecting and an educational institution, and all activities are aimed at providing an invaluable resource and experience for Yale University faculty, staff, and students, as well as for the general public.

The museum is free and open to the public: Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM; (Thursday until 8:00 PM, September–June); Sunday 1:00–6:00 PM; closed Mondays and major holidays. 1111 Chapel Street (at York Street), New Haven, Connecticut.

For additional press information, please contact Amy Jean Porter, Associate Director of Communications, 203.432.0611, or amy.porter@yale.edu.

## Frame and Boundary

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Before making a single mark, an artist is presented with four lines: those formed by the perimeter of the page. Many artists take inspiration from this natural linear frame and reference its structure in their resulting drawing. Jo Baer, for example, repeats the border of the page in the rectilinear forms of *Untitled* (1961) and *Agent* (1962). Julia Mangold mimics the effect of the border by highlighting the boundaries of solid shapes in her triptych *May 13, 2001* (2001). Each drawing in this section explores the interconnection of positive and negative space and examines the construction of line through its response to the boundaries of the page.

6. Margaret Priest (British, born 1944)  
*Auditorium*, 1972  
Graphite, 22 5/8 x 31 1/16 in. (57.5 x 79 cm)  
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker, B.A. 1935.  
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