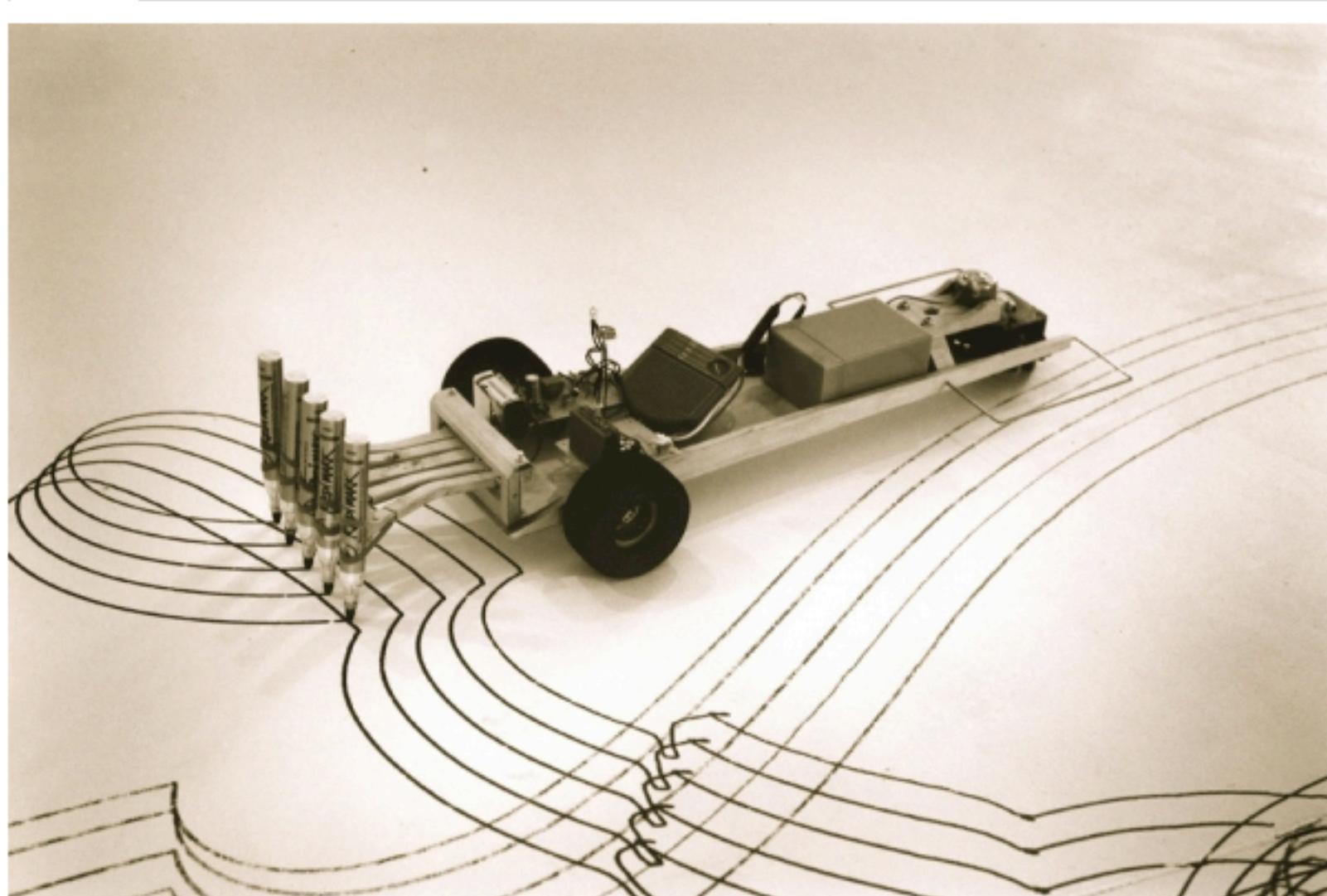


arts / visual arts reviews

Drawn 2010 flips understanding of drawing sideways

by ROBIN LAURENCE on JUL 27, 2010 at 1:36 PM

STORY PHOTOS 2



Alan Storey's battery-operated drawing machine combines the traditional with the technological.

Drawn 2010: Artists and Drawings  
At multiple venues until August 7 and later

Drawn 2010, Vancouver's second annual drawing festival, recently kicked off with its first-ever juried exhibition. Titled *The Drawing Room*, mounted in the Pendulum Gallery, and selected by a knowledgeable group of artists, curators, historians, and critics, the show examines contemporary drawing practice from across the country. Unlike other exhibits in Drawn 2010, however, it is disappointingly conservative.

Although *The Drawing Room's* media release promised "innovative works that push beyond conventional definitions and categories", the art on view consists mostly of familiar genres executed in traditional media—graphite, charcoal, ink, and watercolour on paper. Still, a few individual artists, such as Vancouver's Lisa Cinar and Davida Kidd, combine digital and hand-drawn imagery to intriguing ends, and Toronto's Barb Bondy has used a self-inked "COPY" stamp to create an amusing, concept-based, all-over abstraction. Kavavaow Mannomee of Cape Dorset and Erik Jerezano of Toronto have each produced surreal, mixed-media drawings from completely different cultural traditions, and yet both evoke an unsettling confrontation of the conscious and unconscious realms. And Kelly O'Neill of Peterborough has sewn, smocked, and smudged a wonderful little dress.

That our understanding of drawing can be stretched, twisted, and flipped sideways is evident in a number of independently curated shows at [Drawn's 21](#) other venues across Metro Vancouver. At the Elliott Louis Gallery, look for Takashi Iwasaki's embroidered works on fabric: here, he deploys vibrantly coloured cotton thread to describe both fine lines and dense forms. Born in Japan and based in Winnipeg, the artist has created a series of whimsical pictures in which the geometric and the biomorphic—from jots, dots, loops, and bars to pods, tendrils, flowers, and tadpoles—play decoratively across small fields of black or white. In their formal and spatial qualities, their musicality, brilliant colours, and unabashed charm, Iwasaki's embroidered drawings are reminiscent of the paintings of early modernist Wassily Kandinsky.

Most outstanding in the group show at the Marion Scott Gallery are Elisapee Ishulutaq's monumental drawings in oil stick on paper. Introduced through recent workshops at the print studio in Pangnirtung, an Inuit settlement in eastern Nunavut, the oil stick medium seems to have given the octogenarian Ishulutaq licence to bust out of all constraints of colour, form, and scale. *Nunagah (My Home Place)*, executed on a 5-foot-high by 30-foot-long roll of paper, recalls scenes from the artist's traditional childhood on the land—hunting, fishing, playing, and travelling from camp to camp. More powerful, however, is Ishulutaq's simple and profound *Pirlikasatuq (Close to Starvation)*, a six-panel drawing in which a tiny figure walks out into an immense landscape of white snow and black sky. The feeling here is one of Arctic existentialism, of a human being alone in a vast, indifferent, star-filled universe.

At the Jennifer Kostuik Gallery, independent curator Rachel Rosenfield Lafo has assembled *Redefining Drawing*, a group show that truly addresses unconventional and innovative approaches to the medium. Here, it's not the imagery that breaks boundaries so much as it is the means of achieving it. The show, which features artists from the east coast of the United States and the West Coast of Canada, includes Jim Dingilian's landscapes created with smoke inside glass bottles; Kumiko Fujinami's complex automatic drawings in fine white gel pen on a large black ground; Jane Masters's labour-intensive burnt paper and etched metal coils, spirals, and floral forms; Carol Prusa's acrylic domes, intensively worked with silver point and graphite powder and punctuated by tiny dots of fibre-optic lights; and Kako Ueda's intricate and fantastical cut paper. It also incorporates Alan Storey's battery-operated little drawing machine, which drags five black marking pens across a field of white canvas like a tractor tilling an expanse of bald prairie.

The individual works here are wonderfully engaging, as are their correspondences to each other: the microcosmic and the macrocosmic, the mechanistic and the obsessively hand-wrought, the provocative and the meditative. It's a beautifully executed and organized body of work.



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