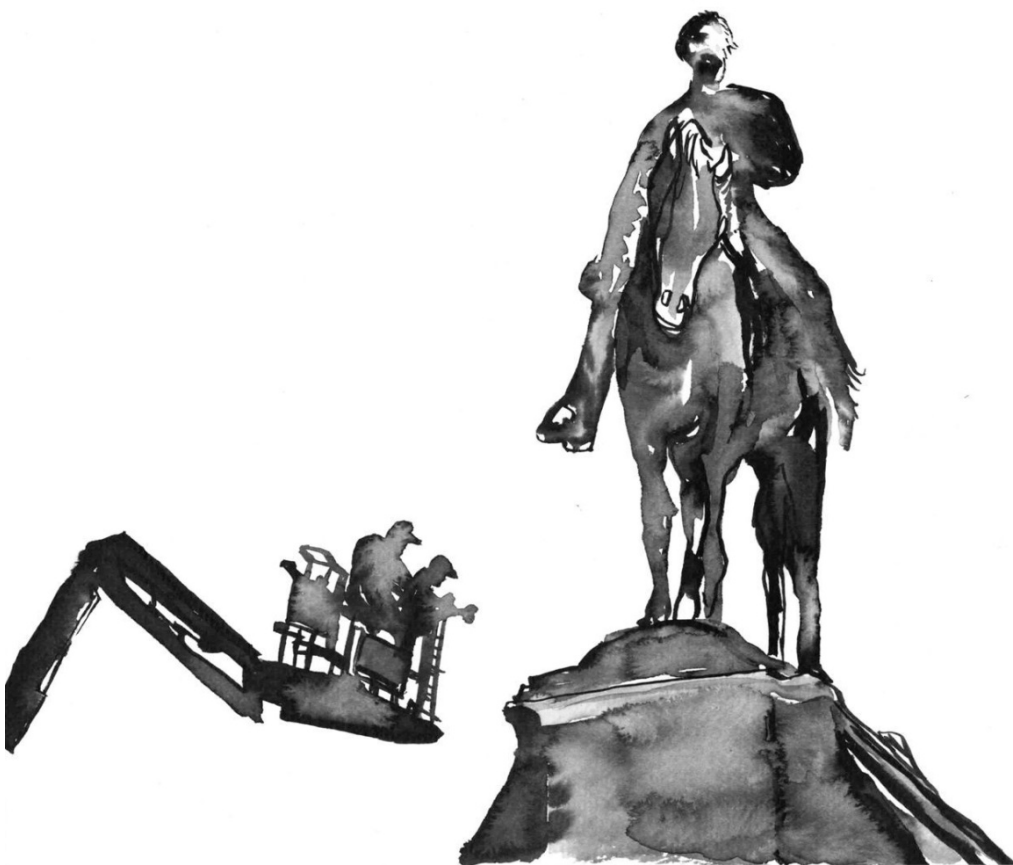


BURNAWAY

Drawn: Concept & Craft at SECCA, Winston-Salem

BY SUSAN LEE MACKEY
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Kambui Olujimi, *A Shadow of Your Former Self*, 2020. Courtesy the artist.

At the entrance, a quartet of life-size lithographs depicts two figures colliding. Each of the four prints shows the same subject but in different stages of the drawing process: two people, nude, hold each other in an ambiguous pose, in the throes of a dance or a fight. In the second frame, the couple is quite literally light on their feet, but as the drawings progress, the marks become frenzied and the images grow more opaque. It's a remarkable example of the unique ability that drawing as a medium has to suggest the passage of time. The artist William Kentridge said he meant to "depict the futile battles against entropy . . . representing bodies aging rather than bodies triumphant."

These are anxious drawings for an age of anxiety.

Hanging nearby is a series of dystopian images by Baris Gokturk, *You Can Hold Yourself Back from the Sufferings of the World*, made this year. The title of the piece comes from an aphorism by Franz Kafka: "You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world, that is something you are free to do and it accords with your nature, but perhaps this very holding back is the one suffering you could avoid." Peeling layers of pencil, ink, acrylic, and oil paint conceal and reveal the text like some fiery imperative.

I get the same sense of impermanence from a set of ink and graphite drawings nearby by Kambui Olujimi, from his series *When Monuments Fall*. Four monuments are depicted, swathed in tarp, shielding their subjects. Their loose, gestural style gives the pictures a sense of immediacy, as if Olujimi hurried to complete them. It's unclear whether the sheathed objects are coming or going. Olujimi's veils set up a tension between objects that might be "full of promise" or "abstracted mistake."



LeRoy Neiman, *Jimmy Baldwin*, 1964. Courtesy SECCA.

These works are all found in the opening gallery of the group show *DRAWN: Concept & Craft* at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston Salem. *DRAWN* was founded in 2014 by the artist Thomas Vu and has since travelled to institutions around the world. The iteration at SECCA was organized by Vu and SECCA curator Wendy Earle, with the assistance of Brian Novatny. For each iteration, the host institution presents a selection of works from local artists alongside the existing collection, so that *DRAWN* continues to grow. The gallery

text at the entrance to the show boasts, “What once started with a handful of artists has grown into a robust collection of more than 60 artists and 200 works.” The show is meant to explore the question, what does drawing mean to you?

Considering the open-endedness of this question and the accumulative nature of the exhibition, it’s no wonder that the contents spill over into an incoherent mass. There are a lot of collages throughout the show that supposedly “apply the principles and actions of drawings.” These aren’t drawings, they’re “*drawings*.” It’s not that I’m not convinced—I just don’t care. There are better examples of the possibilities of drawing as a medium.

Take an untitled series of landscapes by Luis Silva. From a distance, the graphite on paper drawings appear naturalistic, but they are deceptive. Moving closer reveals a shift in technique and mood, and suddenly they resemble the saccharine environments of a Disney cartoon.

I found the amount of works on display unnecessary, but that might make for a more accessible show; the vastness of the exhibition allows for each viewer to choose their own adventure. Drawing is at once responsive, meditative, documentary, intervention,—a medium that is thrillingly (and, yes, sometimes frustratingly) expansive.

DRAWN: Concept & Craft is on view at SECCA, Winston-Salem, thru February 15, 2021.

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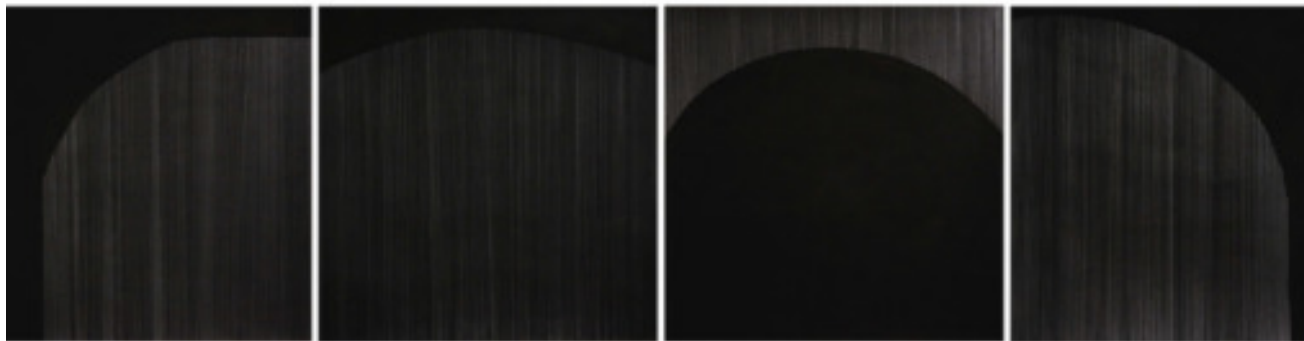
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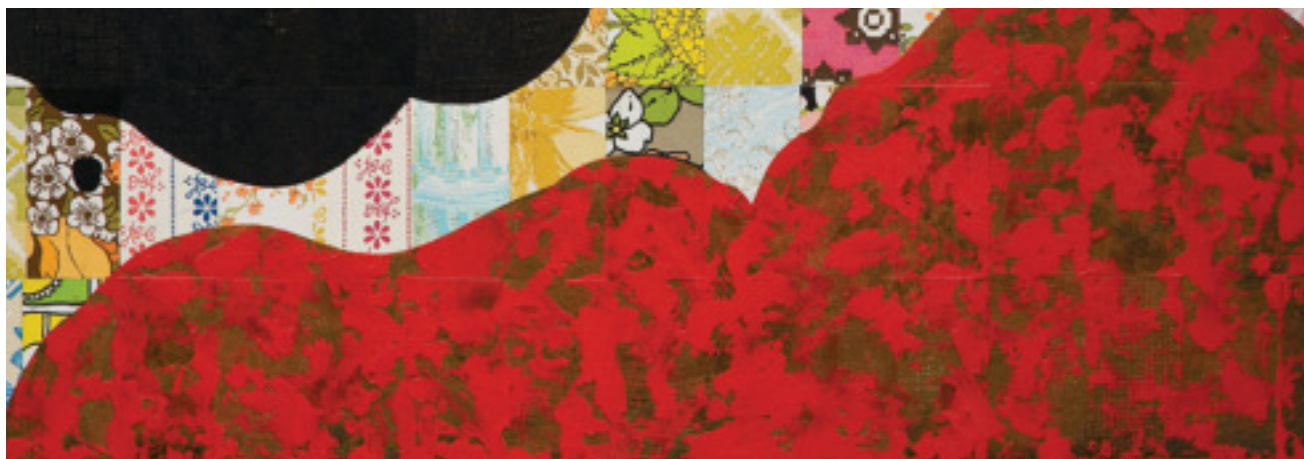


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