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150 Drawings by Eva Hesse Uncover the Artist's Fascinating Working Process

THE DRAWING CENTER ANNOUNCES

Eva Hesse Drawing

May 6 – July 15, 2006

Main Gallery, 35 Wooster Street

Opening Reception: Friday, May 5, 6 – 8 pm

New York, March 2006—From May 6 to July 15, The Drawing Center will present ***Eva Hesse Drawing***, the first exhibition in over 20 years to focus on the critical role of drawing in the achievements of Eva Hesse (1936-1970), one of the most influential artists of the postwar era. Organized by The Drawing Center, New York, and The Menil Collection, Houston, the exhibition will illuminate the complex and rich crossover between drawing and sculpture in Hesse's work. The exhibition will be a rare opportunity to view 150 of Hesse's fascinating works on paper and is significant as the first public presentation in New York of the sketchbooks, working notes, and diaries, which she kept from the mid-1960s to the end of her life. *Eva Hesse Drawing* is co-curated by Catherine de Zegher and Elisabeth Sussman, Curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography at The Whitney Museum of American Art.

Eva Hesse Drawing will feature some of the artist's finest drawings alongside a critical selection of sculptures that reflect the artist's investigations into translating the drawn line into three-dimensional space. By juxtaposing Hesse's drawings and sculptures, the exhibition presents an exciting revision of the conventional interpretation of the working processes of this groundbreaking artist.

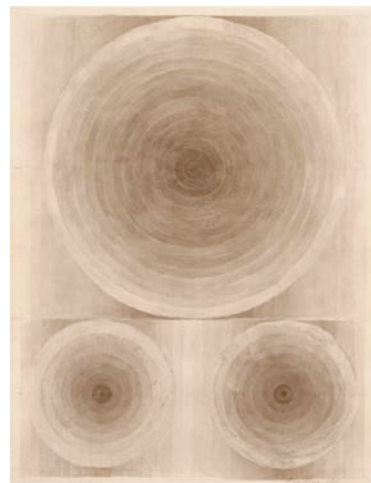
Eva Hesse Drawing begins with early collages, ink washes, and gouaches from 1960 to 1964 that engage many thematic paradoxes, from biomorphic and geometric abstraction to a mix of organic and inorganic forms. In 1964 and 1965, working in semi-rural isolation in Essen, Germany, Hesse produced a series of drawings in which she delineated contours of interconnected tubes and planes with a controlled line that was at once both gestural and mechanical. This new engagement with the line opened a period of growing confidence and independence. After Hesse's return to New York in September 1965, Hesse's work challenged the geometric regularity and rigidity prevalent in art at the time. She explored ideas such as transience, chance, and difference in her "grid" drawings



Eva Hesse, no title, n.d. Collage, ink, and crayon on paper, 9 x 12 in. Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio. Gift of Helen Hesse Charash, 1982.

as well as in her “circle” drawings, in which empty circles were drawn with a compass and graded in washes. In the same year Hesse created several stunning reliefs that combined papier-mâché, cord, paint, and other materials—a practice that she would later revisit with surprising results.

Eva Hesse Drawing also includes the artist’s “test pieces” (1967-69), a form of three-dimensional sketches in which she experimented with non-traditional media such as latex, rubber, plaster, cheesecloth, aluminum screening, and unfired clay. These works will be exhibited alongside numerous sketches and working notes that offer a unique behind-the-scenes look into the beginnings of some of her most important and well-known sculptures. The exhibition closes with a series of “window drawings,” begun in 1968, which show a strong relationship to the layering effects found in her later latex sculptures.



Eva Hesse, no title, 1966. Black ink wash and pencil, 11 ¼ x 9 in. Collection of Tony and Gail Ganz, Los Angeles

The exhibition features major works loaned by the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin, Ohio; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Tate, London; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands; Museum Wiesbaden, Germany; The Eva Hesse Estate; and numerous private collections in the U.S. and Europe.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Eva Hesse was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1936. Three years later, her family fled Nazi-occupied Germany and moved to New York, where she became a U.S. citizen. Hesse earned her BFA in 1959 from Yale University, where she studied painting and drawing with Josef Albers and Rico Lebrun. In her brief career Hesse produced a copious number of drawings while working in a seemingly inexhaustible range of media, from watercolor and pencil to found objects, string, and resin. Filtering the influences of Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Conceptualism, and Minimalism through her own distinctive sensibility, Hesse continually experimented with new materials.

An early and key figure of Post-Minimalism in the United States, Hesse’s work has come to be affiliated primarily with “process art,” which refers to the artist’s focus on the physical properties of materials and the process of applying them. This exhibition highlights the crucial role that drawing played in Hesse’s working process, which in turn gave way to an array of highly innovative techniques and styles that still defy classification. As she commented in 1970:

“...I had a great deal of difficulty with painting but never with drawing... The translation or transference to a large scale and in painting was always tedious. It was not natural and I thought to translate it in some other way. So I started working in relief and with line—using the cords and ropes that are now so commonly used... I varied the materials a lot, but the structure would always be built with cords.” [Cindy Nemser, “A conversation with Eva Hesse” (1970), in *Eva Hesse*, ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge: MIT Press/October Files).]

Hesse’s practice of introducing sculptural materials into drawing and painting continues to influence the multi-disciplinary work so prevalent in contemporary art practice.

PANEL DISCUSSION

On **Saturday, May 6** The Drawing Center will present two panel discussions on the work of Eva Hesse. The programs will be held at **Poets House, 72 Spring Street, 2nd Floor**. The speakers for **Panel I: Line/Language, at 4 pm**, are: **Benjamin H.D. Buchloh**, Franklin D. and Florence Rosenblatt Professor of Modern Art, Harvard University; **Briony Fer**, Professor of Art History at University College London; **Elisabeth Sussman**, Exhibition Co-Curator; and **Anne M. Wagner**, Professor of Art History, University of California, Berkeley. The speakers for **Panel II: Mater/Matter, at 6 pm**, are: **Carol Armstrong**, Doris Stevens Professor in Women's Studies, Princeton University; **Catherine de Zegher**, Exhibition Co-Curator; **Bracha L. Ettinger**, Artist, psychoanalyst, and feminist theorist; and **Mignon Nixon**, Lecturer, Courtauld Institute of Art. Admission for each panel is \$5 (members free).

MEMBERS' EVENT

The Drawing Center is offering its members a **gallery talk** with exhibition co-curators Catherine de Zegher and Elisabeth Sussman on **Wednesday, May 10 at 6 pm**. Space is limited. To make a reservation members should send an email to: jarrington@drawingcenter.org.

PUBLICATION

The Drawing Center and Yale University Press will co-publish a major scholarly catalogue to accompany the exhibition. The catalogue will feature full-color reproductions of all the works in the exhibition and essays by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Catherine de Zegher, Bracha L. Ettinger, Briony Fer, Mignon Nixon, Elisabeth Sussman, Kathryn A. Tuma, and Anne M. Wagner. The 344-page publication will sell for \$50 (\$40 members).

RELATED EXHIBITION

From May 12 through September 17, 2006, The Jewish Museum will present *Eva Hesse: Sculpture*, the first major New York City museum exhibition of this artist's sculpture since 1972. The exhibition, co-curated by Elisabeth Sussman and Fred Wasserman, focuses on Hesse's large-scale latex and fiberglass sculptures. The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York, NY 10128. Tel.: 212.423.3200 (general information), 212.423.3271 (press inquiries).

CREDITS

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EXHIBITION TOUR

The Menil Collection, Houston: February 3 – April 23, 2006

The Drawing Center, New York: May 6 – July 15, 2006

The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles: August 6 – October 23, 2006

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis: November 12, 2006 – February 18, 2007

The Drawing Center is the only not-for-profit U.S. museum to focus solely on the exhibition of drawings, both historical and contemporary. It was established in 1977 to provide opportunities for emerging and under-recognized artists; to demonstrate the significance and diversity of drawings throughout history; and to stimulate public dialogue on issues of art and culture.

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