

RIXLABnotes

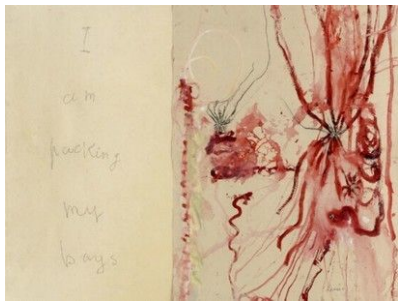
May 2022 No.76



Merit Oppenheim *My Nurse* 1936

Merit Oppenheim is primarily known for her objects and sculptures, but her work at the [Menil](#) includes drawings and these follow on with last month's topic of "bad" drawing. It also extends our idea in another direction.

Sculptors' drawings offer us a special insight. They are often *notations*, which seems wonderfully unselfconscious. They exemplify something germinal and essential about drawing itself: it is an attempt to do something that can't quite be done. We are always *drawing something we can't see* even when there is ostensibly something in front of us. We are never just recording. And for sculptors, there is not even the pretense of making a picture. Instead there is the urge to unwrap the idea of a form and reach inside its embodiment. To the extent that drawing is not in their comfort zone, this very discomfort and the dissonance of the task gives sculptors' drawings a particular traction.

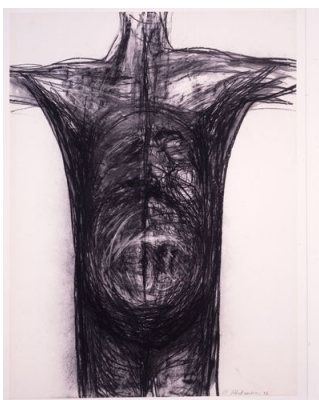


Louise Bourgeois

Austin Kleon reminded me of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's famous Zen-like exclamation quoted by Henri Matisse: ["At last I don't know how to draw!"](#) How much we struggle to learn and suddenly we pass Toulouse-Lautrec going the opposite way. I am in the midst of a new body of drawing and I find the more I do, the harder it is to climb out of the aesthetic groove I have worn, the harder it is to hold on to the germ of truth and freedom I started with. And of course, holding on is exactly the issue.

I think it is a razor's edge, the narrow path we negotiate between clawing our way up toward some kind of competence and the wise voice of letting go, daring us to draw by the seat of our pants.

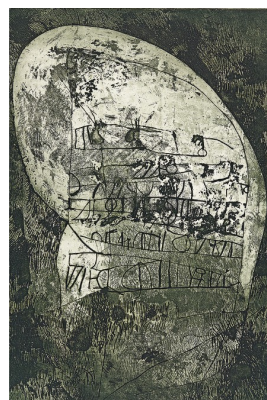
So much of what we have to do to reclaim our own confidence is to find permission wherever we can. My own search for permission led me this week from a visit to the Menil, to thinking about sculptors' drawing, to Austin Kleon's [Keep Going](#) in which he quotes from Sol LeWitt's letter to sculptor Eva Hesse, to looking up that particular correspondence in depth, while at the same time writing about sculptor's drawings and coming all the way back to permission.



Magdalena Abakanowicz



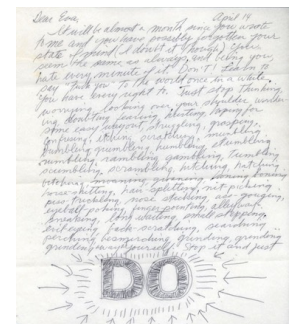
Martin Puryear



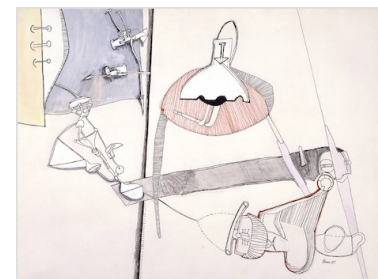
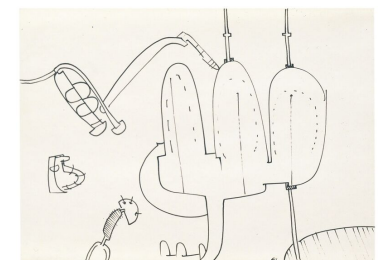
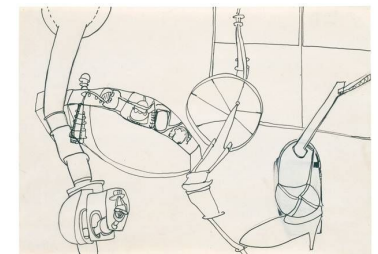
Merit Oppenheim



Eva Hesse and Sol LeWitt



[a page of Sol LeWitt's letters](#)



Eva Hesse