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The Autonomy of Line

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THE AUTONOMY OF LINE

An Abstract

Presented to

Dr. Joel Moss

and the Faculty of the Graduate School

Fort Hays Kansas State College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Art Education

by

Delores Euler

January 1963

Ralph S. Coker
Grad. Dean

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the expressiveness of line made meaningful in its relationship to the entirety of the statement. Subject matter was considered vital and was portrayed as clearly as was within the intrinsic abilities of the artist. The media used were pencil, drypoint, chalk, charcoal, brush, and pen and ink.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The task for the graphic artist is to abstract lines, for in nature, there are no lines, per se, only boundaries. Having achieved the basic abstraction, the artist must then organize the abstracted lines so that they are arranged harmoniously within the confines of his paper, his composition. Having proceeded thus far, he must then introduce his chiaroscuro, his masses of lights and darks, so that his line dominates and yet is dominated in turn.

During the study of line drawing, it became obvious that contour lines are simple, obvious, and often monotonous. They can be enlivened when placed in a meaningful relationship to other parts of the entire composition or when used with color. Outlines, when exaggerated, can become expressive of the bulk they contain. Expressive lines, characterized in part by their various width, direction, angle of direction on the page, indicate moods and meanings. If subject matter is ignored, the artist can become preoccupied with the line itself, resulting in calligraphy.

CONCLUSION

It is line for which the eye searches, whether it be in the active lines of children on a playground or in the pastoral horizontal line of a far horizon of plains country. Yet, the perverse active mind which receives the eye's pictures does not want line alone. The mind yearns for an intellectual search, a probing of awareneses in order to hunt out and establish the line.

This same wish for a mental game and the ensuing reassurance which follows the discovery of the autonomous line is the answer to the pleasure the mind feels when hearing Bach's "In Deepest Grief" from St. Mathew's Passion. Here the strong, melodious, autocratic line is carried by strings in the bass as the choral voices are arranged contrapuntally against it. The line dominates, and then is dominated by the choral melody line. The mind is reassured to hear the strong bass line as it is reassured to see the strong line in a successful drawing. And yet, in its perversity, the mind is best satisfied when the line does not dominate endlessly, but is seemingly lost temporarily in the shadings of other elements of the composition.

And so the graphic artist must work tirelessly to establish his autonomous line, to delineate his line, and for the effectiveness of his line, alternatively to accent and to lose the line within the organization of his composition.



Drypoint

15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 19 $\frac{1}{4}$ "



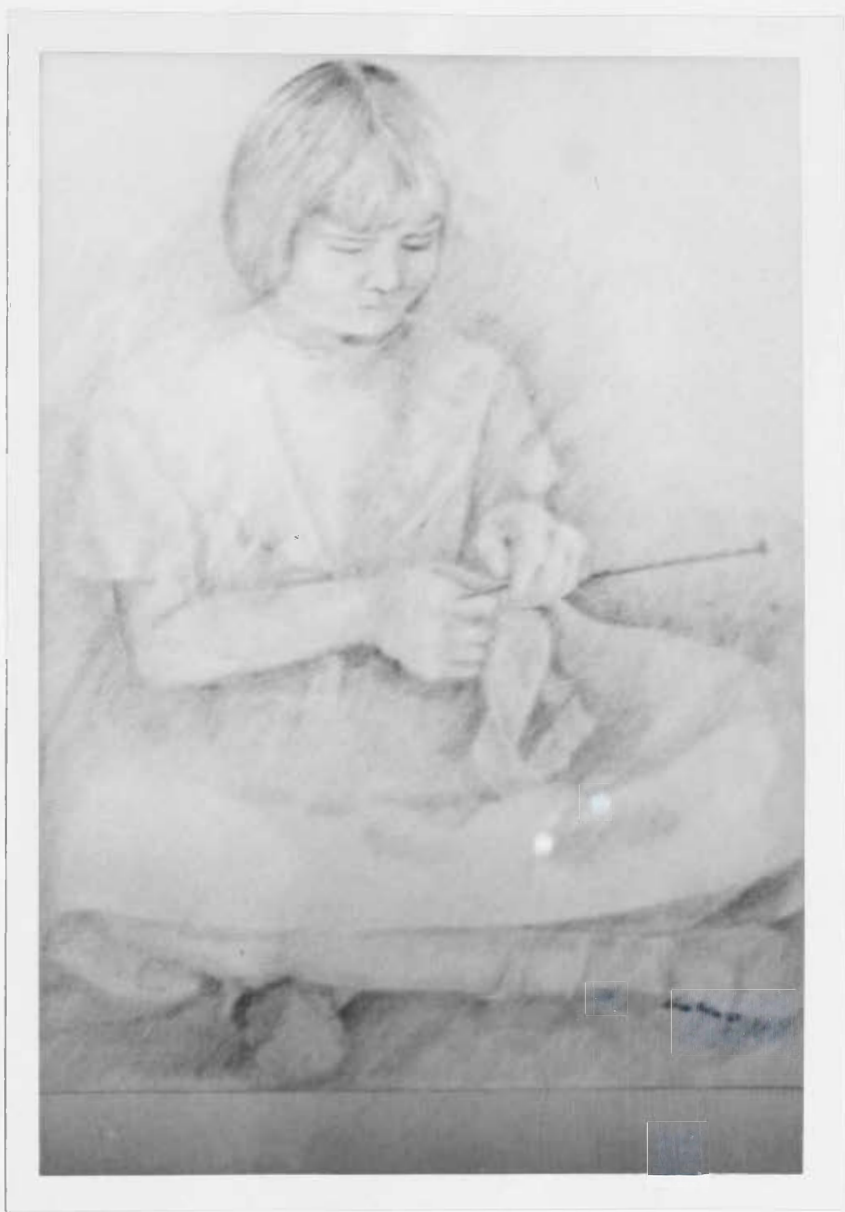
Charcoal

11½" x 26½"



Chalk

9½" x 12½"



Pencil

13½" x 17"



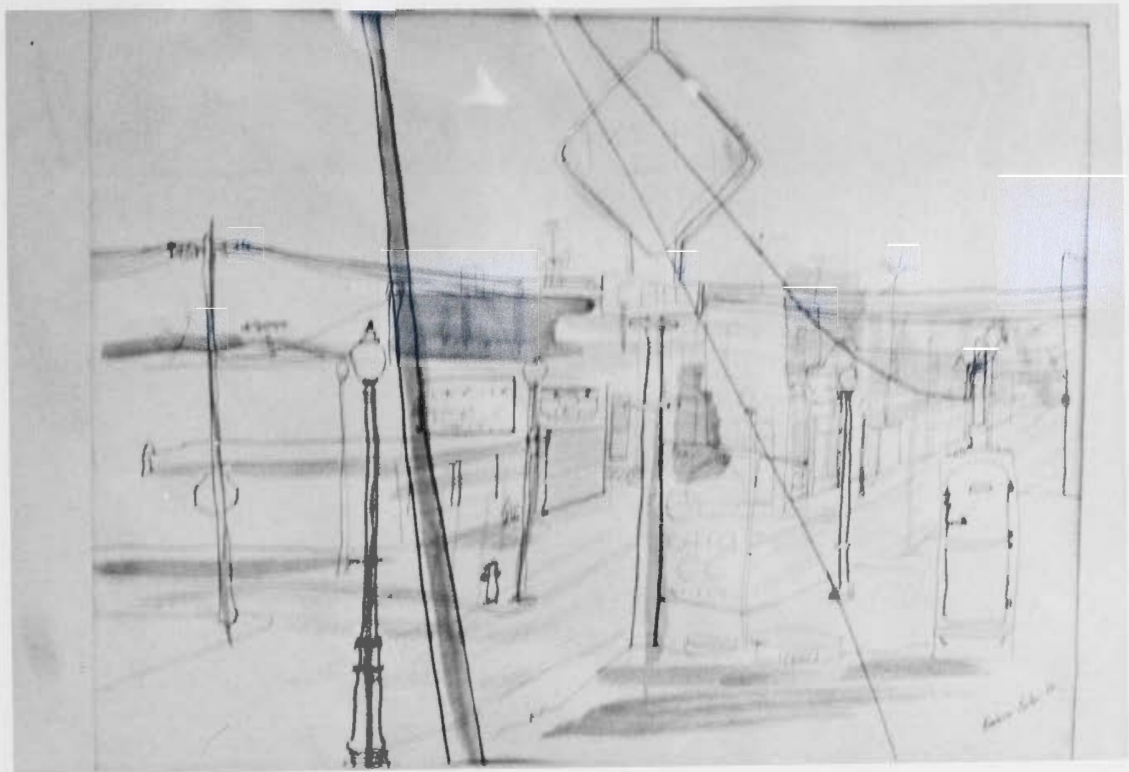
Pencil

8½" x 12"



Pencil

6½" x 8½"



Brush, Pen, Ink

$16\frac{3}{4}$ " x $21\frac{3}{4}$ "