

SILVERPOINT AND METALPOINT DRAWING

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO
THE MEDIUM

SUSAN SCHWALB
AND
TOM MAZZULLO

A **Focal Press** Book

The background of the cover features a grid of squares with various textures, including wood grain and fine mesh. In the bottom right corner, several drawing tools are arranged diagonally: a pencil with a wooden handle, a silver metalpoint pen with a blue grip, a silver silverpoint pen with a textured grip, and a black pen with a silver tip.

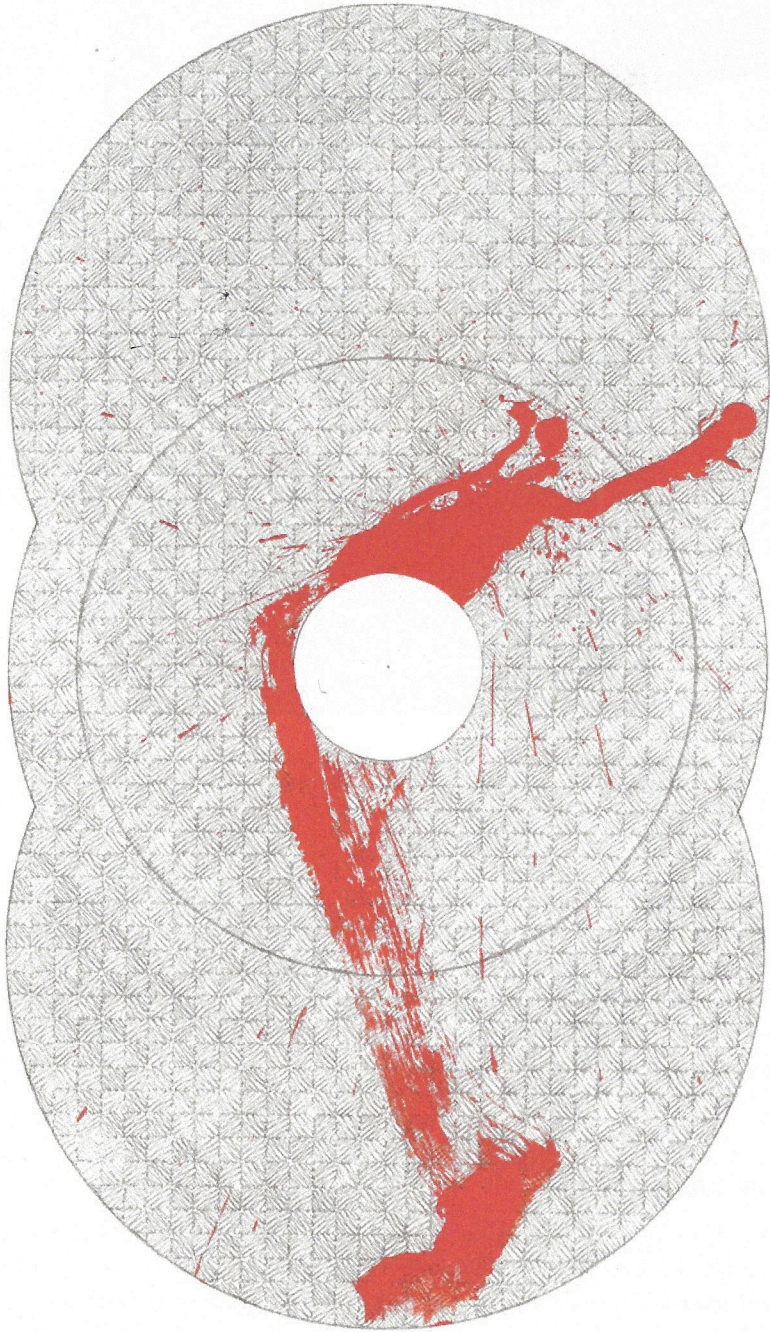


FIGURE 7.35 Ron Janowich, *Untitled*, 2011, silverpoint and encaustic on clay-coated paper, 18 × 14 inches (45.72 × 35.56 cm), courtesy of the artist

of a pristine white acrylic ground over which the artist has delicately “etched” minute Arabic words and phrases expressing Sufi thoughts. She used pencil and silverpoint with varying degrees of pressure, but it is almost impossible to see the images with the naked eye. The work is the most minimal and subtle silverpoint drawing one might encounter.¹⁴

Cynthia Lin (American, b. 1964) has created small drawings that seem abstract but are actually (according to the artist) *trompe l’oeil* portraits of dust and hair (Figure 7.31). Frequently placed on a shelf, they play with the confusion between reality and imagination. Marietta Hoferer (German, 1962) and her husband, Michael Kukla (Czech, b. 1963), who divide their time between New York and France, have both been working in silverpoint for around ten years. Hoferer is known for her minimalist, process-oriented, tape-and-pencil drawings. As if in a meditative state, she draws grids of fine lines on black Plike paper. In *Feb 20, 2015* (Figure 7.32), although each line was drawn against a straight edge, the hand of the artist is still evident, and slight deviations and accidents are an essential part of the process. Kukla continues his use of the hexagon as his basic structural element. In *sp mx 1* (Figure 7.33) he starts in the center, and as he draws outward he creates a visual field shifting across the page.¹⁵

Jonathan Higgins (American, b. 1962), who runs Manneken Press, a fine art print publisher in Illinois, was inspired to take up metalpoint drawing after seeing the exhibition *Drawing in Silver and Gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns* at The British Museum in 2015. In *Untitled III* (Figure 7.34) marks were made with wide brass and silver wire twisted and pressed into the black ground of the paper, giving the illusion of raised or embossed marks. Ron Janowich (American, b. 1948) first created a geometric abstract form over which he drew a grid of small squares made up of diagonal



FIGURE 7.31 Cynthia Lin, *Itch #10* (detail), 2001, silver on gesso on paper, 7 × 9 inches of 11 × 14 total (27.94 × 35.56 cm), courtesy of the artist

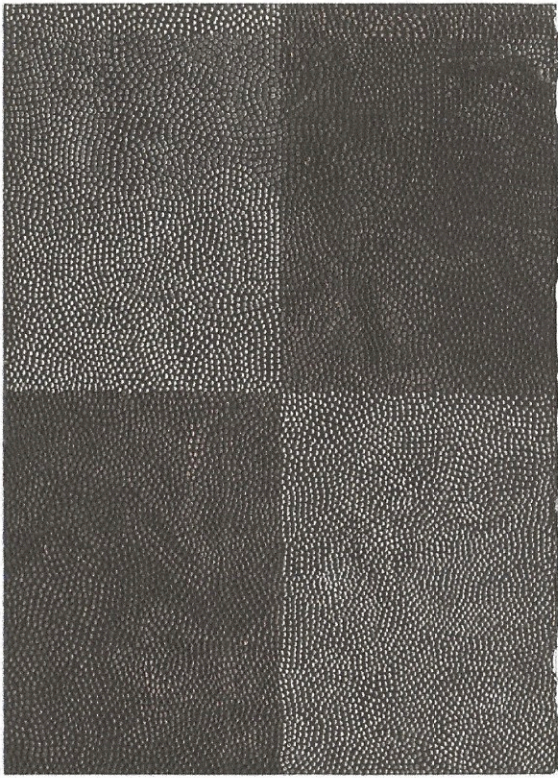


FIGURE 7.34 Jonathan Higgins, *Untitled III*, 2017, silver and brass on black gesso on Fabriano Rosaspina paper, 12 × 8 3/4 inches (30.48 × 22.22 cm), courtesy of the artist

lines. Once this pattern was complete, an act of complete bravery impelled him to fling colored encaustic onto the paper in the manner of Jackson Pollock or Franz Kline (Figure 7.35).

Lucie Beppler (German, b. 1961) has done a body of elegant line drawings combining the medium with etching and engraving needles. She scratches into the surface building up relief-like abstract compositions¹⁶ (Figure 7.36). Also using very fine lines, Sam Messenger (British, b. 1980) constructs web-like designs to form an intricate and geometric pattern that conveys an illusion of depth. He often makes enormous wall-sized drawings which can only be appreciated on very close inspection (Figure 7.37).

Conceptual Work

Several artists have pushed metalpoint off the surface of paper onto walls. Linda Hutchins (American, b. 1957), has used her grandmother's silver spoon to make large, 9 x 12-foot wall drawings. In *Lineal Silver (pool)* she drew with her spoon to create a network of lines that swirl and undulate across the wall. In recent works she incorporated sterling silver thimbles (for an example, see Figure 4.11) into her practice. In *Clapping Music Notation Study 5* (Figure 7.38) the pattern of marks was made by striking the drawing according to the rhythms of Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* (1972).

Natalie Loveless (Canadian, b. 1971) uses the medium in context-based performances. In an early work entitled *CoOperation*, 2004, she moved in to the gallery space for five days and

Silverpoint, and metalpoint more generally, is the practice of marking with soft metal on a specially prepared drawing surface. Experiencing a resurgence in recent years, contemporary metalpoint art is realist and abstract, traditional and conceptual.

Silverpoint and Metalpoint Drawing is the essential manual of metalpoint technique, written by Susan Schwalb and Tom Mazzullo, contemporary masters of the medium. This book is the first treatise on the subject for artists and art teachers, with chapters on early history; materials, including grounds, supports, metals, and tools; techniques for working in metalpoint and artwork in mixed media; and care of metalpoint artworks. Not only is it beautifully illustrated, this book also demonstrates how to photograph and exhibit metalpoint art. Featuring a gallery of drawings by contemporary artists, along with their tips and insights, *Silverpoint and Metalpoint Drawing* is a perfect introduction for students of the medium and an inspiration for those already more familiar with it.

Susan Schwalb is one of the foremost figures in the current silverpoint revival. She was born in New York City in 1944 and studied at Carnegie Mellon University. She has had over 50 solo exhibitions in galleries and museums worldwide, and her work is represented in most major public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the British Museum, London. Schwalb was one of only three living artists included in the historical metalpoint exhibition *Drawing in Silver and Gold: Leonardo to Jasper Johns* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. She lives in New York City.

Tom Mazzullo was born in Williamsport, Pennsylvania in 1968 and attended Tyler School of Art, where he was awarded a BFA in Printmaking in 1990. He earned an MFA from Syracuse University in 1993 and has taught drawing at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, the University of Denver, and the Art Students League of Denver, and he has lectured and demonstrated silverpoint all over the country. He has exhibited his silverpoint drawings in museums and galleries nationwide, has work in several notable collections, and is a member of Spark Gallery, Denver. He lives in Westminster, Colorado.

DRAWING TECHNIQUE

Cover image: Susan Schwalb, *Harmonizations #13 (detail)*, 2017.
Photo by Elle DioGuardi. Courtesy of the artist.

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