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Selections Spring '98

LOCATION: [Drawing Center](#)
ADDRESS: 35 Wooster Street, New York 10013
HOURS: Feb 21-Mar 28, 1998 Tue-Sat 11:00am-6:00pm
CROSS STREET: Between Grand and Broome Streets.



Enrique Chagoya, "Gabriel Metsu," 1997

There's a deceptive modesty to many of the shows mounted at the Drawing Center, no doubt inspired by the intimate scale that's common to the form. Viewers are likely to be pulled so closely into the orbit of a piece that they might end up feeling as if they were peering over the artist's shoulder. That's certainly the case with the work in this wide-ranging show, the product of twelve international artists who are united only by their desire to challenge the conventional definition of what a drawing is.

To appreciate Xawery Wolski's work, you'll have to scrunch up your eyes to get a really good look at the hundreds of tiny pinpricks massed together to create biomorphic shapes. The end-product seems less important than the meticulously rendered marks that poke and prod the ordinary paper-stock into a site of tactile delight.

Nineteenth-century property deeds serve as Douglas Navarra's canvas. Battered and stained with age, the documents' once eminently practical concerns now take on a florid, even alien air, thanks to the elaborate handwriting and diction of the period. The past becomes an unwitting collaborator with the artist, whose rigorously applied color grids clash against the randomness of decay.

Enrique Chagoya also interacts with the past, specifically the legacy of European high art. He's taken a 19th-century folio of old masters' works and superimposed a pastiche of Pre-Columbian, Modernist and cartoon imagery onto them to both mock and destabilize their sanctimonious aura. Possibly the most conceptually ambitious artist in the show, Chagoya's stated goal is to achieve what he calls "a reverse anthropology or reverse Western art history. Instead of a European artist appropriating the artistic expressions of former colonies, I ask the question: What kind of art would have been created if the opposite had happened?" But the prevailing Disneyfied imagery of much of Chagoya's work suggests that the real victor of the colonial system may be the American entertainment empire, already hard at work re-writing history in its own image.

Stephen Sollins, an artist putting appropriated material to a very different use, has created a series of elegantly simple works called "Wilt." They're comprised entirely of the obituary page of the "New York Times," shorn of all text and images. What remains are the borders: the skeletal forms that once rigidly imposed order on the page now limp and sag on the gallery wall as they become attenuated with age. "Wilt" is exactly the kind of deceptively modest enterprise that the Drawing Center excels in, a work of economical means and compact size that nevertheless re-orders the way we see things.--Charles Hutchinson

last updated: Tuesday March 17, 1998
 photo: The Drawing Center