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## Jim Dine: Drawing with Light

Submitted by Thaw Conservati... on Wed, 05/11/2011 - 9:47am

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*This post was created by Lindsey Tyne, Sherman Fairchild Post Graduate Fellow in Paper Conservation.*

Jim Dine was inspired by a 1984 trip to The Glyptothek in Munich, to create a series of figurative drawings based on Greek and Roman antiquities; they would ultimately function as positive transparencies in the production of the **heliogravure** prints (helio — "light"; gravure — "engraving") for his limited edition book *Glyptotek*, 1988. Due to the ultimate function of these drawings, Dine used materials that would either block or transmit light and, thus, was restricted to the use of opaque black media on translucent supports. Over the course of two winters from 1987-1988 in a studio in Venice, Italy, Dine created forty drawings in this manner, working from photographic reproductions of antique sculptures. These drawings make up his body of work known as the *Glyptotek Drawings*. ([/collection/Jim-Dine-The-Glyptotek-Drawings](#)).



Jim Dine (b. 1935) *Glyptotek Drawings* Charcoal on Mylar. 17 x 13 inches (43.2 x 33 cm) Promised gift of the artist to The Morgan Library & Museum. Photograph courtesy of The Pace Gallery. © 2009 Jim Dine / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

### Translucent vs. Opaque

*"The drawings are about light, as is the technique used to transfer them to the plates."*

*—Dine, December 22, 2010*

Light was an essential factor in Dine's choice of materials, guiding him as he purchased supplies from local art supply stores. The ability of light to pass through the drawings was heavily dependent on the type of support, thus Dine's main criterion was its degree of translucency. Dine used three different categories of supports to fulfill this requirement: clear plastic sheets, frosted plastic sheets, and translucent paper. Dine claims to have had no preference for one type of support over the other; however, more than half of the drawings were executed on frosted plastic sheets and only three are on clear plastic.

The size of each drawing was a secondary factor in Dine's choice of supports. Knowing that he wanted to create a printed book and that the drawings would be transferred to the printing plate at actual-size, the drawings all needed to be of consistent dimensions. These drawings range in size from 8 to 26 inches in height and 10 to 20 inches in width. Within these dimensions, a few drawings have crop lines or marks indicating how much of the drawing should be transferred to the printing plate ([figure 1 \(/sites/default/files/images/blog/01\\_Drawing-9.jpg\)](#)). In other cases, the drawings have been roughly cut down to the desired dimensions with the occasional crop line still visible along the edge.

To block the passage of light through the translucent supports, Dine created opaque drawings using only black media.

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Working in black allowed him to create drawings with a dual function: drawings that could be viewed in reflected light, as well as drawings that could be used as positive transparencies. Dine selected materials with which he was familiar, allowing him to make intuitive choices as he worked, based on years of experience. When asked about his specific material choices for each drawing, Dine responded, "It's the way I cook." <sup>i</sup>

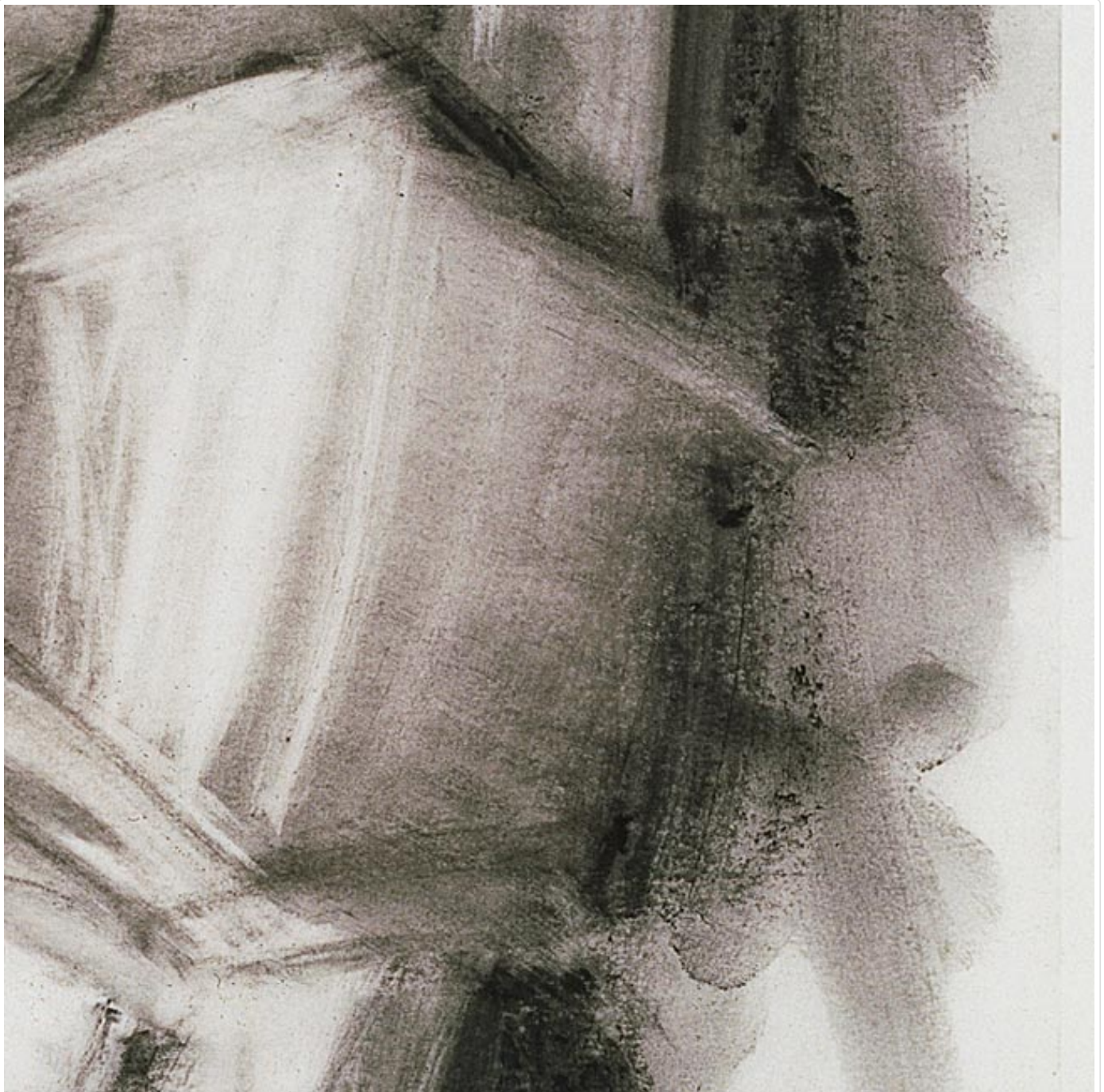
### Building up the Layers

Dine began each drawing with charcoal or **lithographic crayon**, which he manipulated with his fingers (figure 2 ([/sites/default/files/images/blog/01\\_Drawing-9.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/01_Drawing-9.jpg))) and a kneaded eraser to create subtle gradations. On paper and frosted plastic supports, Dine used vine and compressed charcoal as his initial drawing material. However, when he worked on a clear plastic support, Dine required a stickier drawing material that would adhere to the very smooth surface and still allow for later manipulation. For this, Dine chose to use soft lithographic crayons. In several drawings Dine created passages of charcoal that have the appearance of a liquid. He achieved this effect by applying a layer of spray fixative and using his finger to manipulate the charcoal before the fixative dried. To create large areas of smudged charcoal, Dine first applied the charcoal over the area and then manipulated it to create a continuous tone. Evidence of this working method is visible in the lower left corner of *Glyptotek Drawing* ([/sites/default/files/images/blog/01\\_Drawing-9.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/01_Drawing-9.jpg)) [9], where the texture from the directly applied charcoal can be seen in contrast to the manipulated tonal area (figure 3 ([/sites/default/files/images/blog/03\\_Drawing-9\\_detail.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/03_Drawing-9_detail.jpg))).



([/sites/default/files/images/blog/01\\_Drawing-9.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/01_Drawing-9.jpg)).

Figure 1: Glyptotek Drawing [9] with crop marks indicating how the drawing should be transferred to the printing plate.



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/02\_Drawing-11\_detail.jpg)

Figure 2: Detail of Dine's fingerprints in the manipulated charcoal of Glyptotek Drawing [11].



[\( /sites/default/files/images/blog/03\\_Drawing-9\\_detail.jpg\)]((/sites/default/files/images/blog/03_Drawing-9_detail.jpg))

Figure 3: Detail of Glyptotek Drawing [9] showing texture from directly applied charcoal on the left, in contrast to the manipulated tonal area on the right.



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/04\_Drawing-36\_whole.jpg)

Figure 4: Glyptotek Drawing [36]

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Once the initial charcoal or crayon drawing was completed, subsequent layers of black media were built up and secured with spray fixative as needed. These subsequent layers may have appeared in the form of more charcoal or crayon, or Dine may have chosen to use one or more different materials, including pastel, graphite, marker, spray paint, india ink or enamel paint. To monitor their evolution, the drawings were periodically pinned or taped to a wall. Ultimately, this working method resulted in heavily worked surfaces that effectively blocked the passage of light.

In *Glyptotek Drawing* [36], Dine created an opaque black background using successive layers of media, which further emphasizes the dismembered head in the drawing ([figure 4 \(/sites/default/files/images/blog/04\\_Drawing-36\\_whole.jpg\)](/sites/default/files/images/blog/04_Drawing-36_whole.jpg)). The head was first drawn in charcoal and heavily coated with spray fixative. Next, Dine used spray paint to block out the majority of the background. While spray paint was effective at creating an opaque layer, it did not allow the control required to follow the contours of the head without depositing drops of paint on top of the charcoal drawing. To fill in areas directly surrounding the head and other areas where the spray paint was translucent, Dine used enamel paint applied with a brush, followed by lithographic crayon and charcoal to fill in any remaining translucent spots once the paint dried.

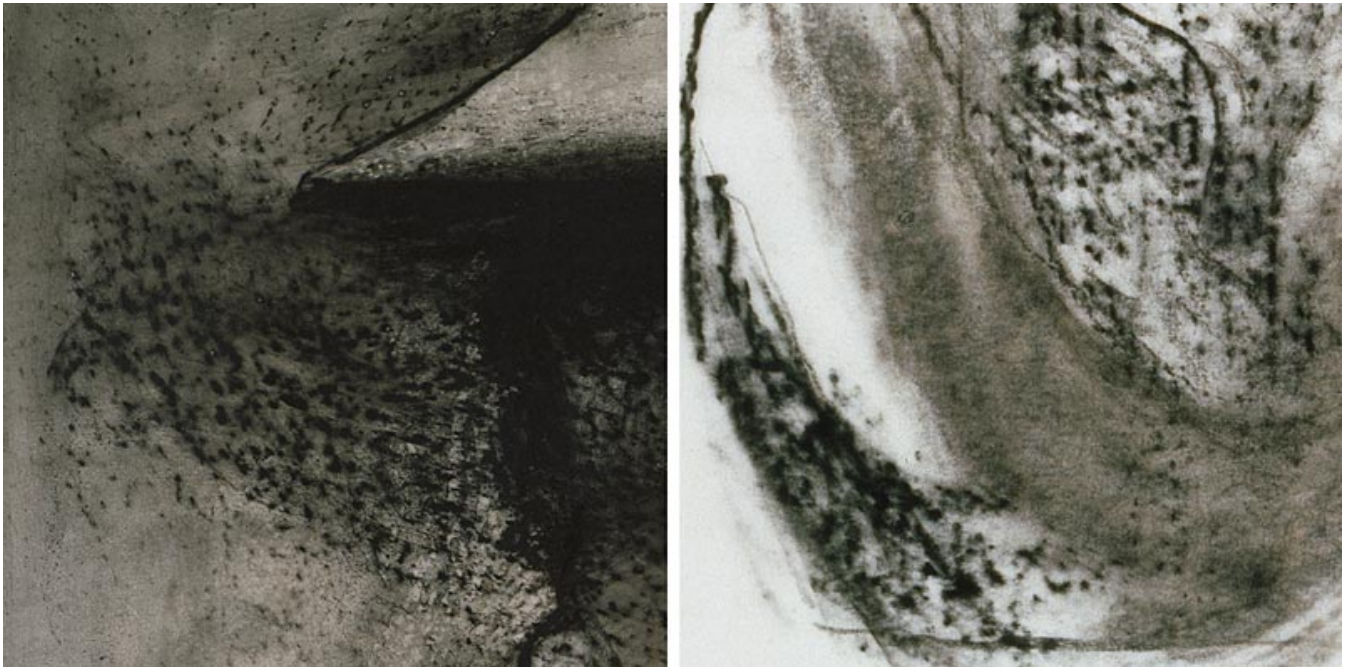
This resulted in a lively, multi-layered opaque black background. When used as a transparency, light could pass through the charcoal drawing of the head and toward the edges of the support where the background still remained transparent. In printed form, the lively black background becomes nearly flat, giving only the barest hint of the modulations in the original drawing.

Dine worked horizontally on top of a variety of white papers in order to be able to see what he was creating. Working in this manner resulted in distinct frottage patterns in many of the final drawings. A rough pattern is prominent in several drawings, while in others there is a pattern of miniature staggered dots, each with a diameter that is approximately one millimeter, or there may be a fine linear pattern akin to the texture of a laid paper ([figure 5 \(/sites/default/files/images/blog/05\\_Drawing\\_7\\_13\\_17-combined.jpg\)](/sites/default/files/images/blog/05_Drawing_7_13_17-combined.jpg)). The patterns are not specific to a particular support. In fact, all patterns appear in each support, sometimes two in one drawing. Thus, the patterns are solely related to the white paper Dine used below each drawing ([figure 6 \(/sites/default/files/images/blog/06\\_Drawing\\_7\\_8-combined.jpg\)](/sites/default/files/images/blog/06_Drawing_7_8-combined.jpg)).



([/sites/default/files/images/blog/05\\_Drawing\\_7\\_13\\_17-combined.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/05_Drawing_7_13_17-combined.jpg))

Figure 5: Examples of the three different frottage patterns found in these drawings: a rough pattern in *Glyptotek Drawing* [7] (detail) on the left; a dot pattern in *Glyptotek Drawing* [13] (detail) in the center; and a linear pattern in *Glyptotek Drawing* [17] (detail) on the right.



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/06\_Drawing\_7\_8-combined.jpg)

Figure 6: The same frottage pattern is visible in drawings that are on different supports. For example, the rough pattern is visible in *Glyptotek Drawing [7]* (detail) on a frosted plastic sheet on the left, as well as in *Glyptotek Drawing [8]* (detail) on paper on the right.

In *Glyptotek Drawing [7]* (/sites/default/files/images/blog/302727\_007.jpg), the rough pattern appears in both positive, when Dine applied the charcoal and pastel, and in negative, when Dine subtracted the media ([figure 7](#)

(/sites/default/files/images/blog/07\_Drawing-7\_neg-rough-pattern.jpg)). This suggests that the drawing was worked from start to finish on the same surface in one drawing session. In other drawings there are either two patterns, or only sections of the drawing that feature a pattern, thus demonstrating that Dine changed the white paper below the drawing, possibly over several drawing sessions.

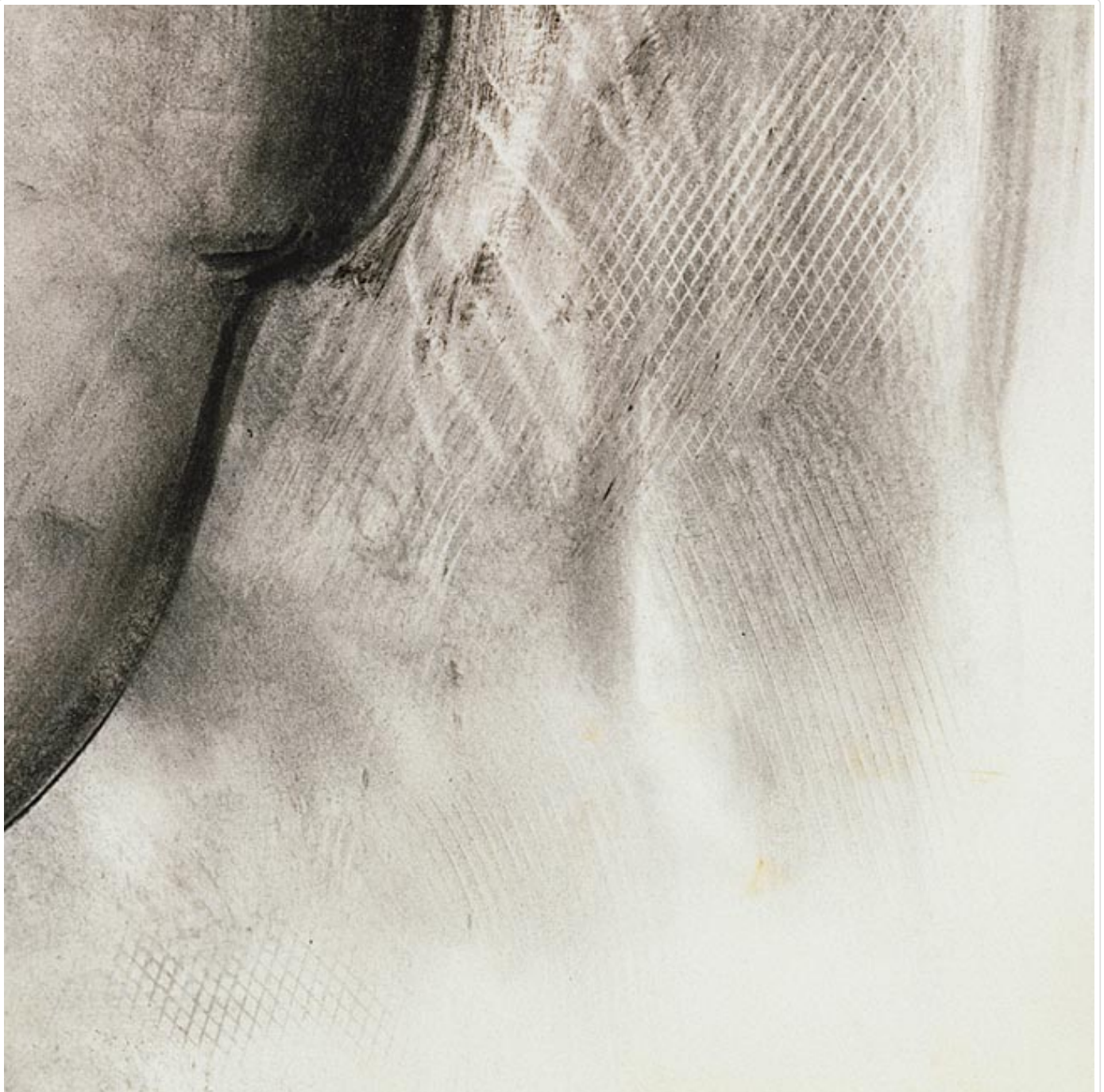
Other patterns seen in some of these drawings do not come from below the supports, but from applied patterned surfaces. In *Glyptotek Drawing [34]*, a diamond pattern resembling a wire mesh can be seen in both positive and negative ([figure 8](#) (/sites/default/files/images/blog/08\_Drawing-34\_diamond-mesh-detail.jpg)). Dine used the mesh in this drawing to apply media, remove media, and manipulate it. In other drawings, the patterns were not entirely intentional. In *Glyptotek Drawings [21]* (/sites/default/files/images/blog/302743\_021.jpg) and *[31]* (/sites/default/files/images/blog/302753\_031.jpg), there is a second type of diamond pattern, which Dine confirmed is a shoe print ([figure 9](#) (/sites/default/files/images/blog/09\_Drawing-21\_shoe-print.jpg)) and assumed he must have stepped on these drawings.<sup>ii</sup>



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/07\_Drawing-7\_neg-rough-pattern.jpg)

Figure 7: Detail of the negative rough pattern in Glyptotek Drawing [7].





(/sites/default/files/images/blog/08\_Drawing-34\_diamond-mesh-detail.jpg)

Figure 8: The wire mesh Dine used to manipulate the media is seen in positive and negative in this detail of Glyptotek Drawing [34].



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/09\_Drawing-21\_shoe-print.jpg)

Figure 9: Detail of shoe print in Glyptotek Drawing [21].

Even though this pattern was unintentional, the print was left on the drawing and transferred to the printing plate. These shoe prints, along with fingerprints, smudges, tears, hairs, and drips from liquid media and heavily applied fixative, reveal Dine's working methods and become part of the history of the *Glyptotek Drawings*, and ultimately are transferred to the prints.

### Putting light into the drawings <sup>iii</sup>

It was necessary for light to penetrate the multi-layered drawings in order to achieve highlights in the final prints. Dine devised innovative subtractive techniques to remove media, using erasers, sandpaper, knives, razor blades, and an intaglio plate scraper to create voids. Light, passing through these negative spaces, thus became Dine's drawing medium.

In all of the drawings, evidence remains of Dine's use of erasers to subtract layers of friable media, whether it is a subtle highlight or a large area of subtraction with remaining eraser crumbs visible ([figure 10](#) (/sites/default/files/images/blog/10\_Drawing-2\_eraser-crumbs.jpg)). The crumbs that remain on the drawings are adhered into place by subsequent layers of fixative and are reproduced in printed form as an abstract tonal pattern. A tonal pattern was not Dine's intention when he left these crumbs on the drawings but instead, as Dine mused, "[I] just left my tracks."<sup>iv</sup>

Once a layer of fixative was applied to the surface, the use of erasers became limited. To create highlights in areas of fixed friable media or in areas of liquid media, Dine used more aggressive means of subtraction. Sandpaper allowed Dine to create large areas of highlights, leaving behind fine scratches in the surface of the drawing as evidence of its use ([figure 11](#)

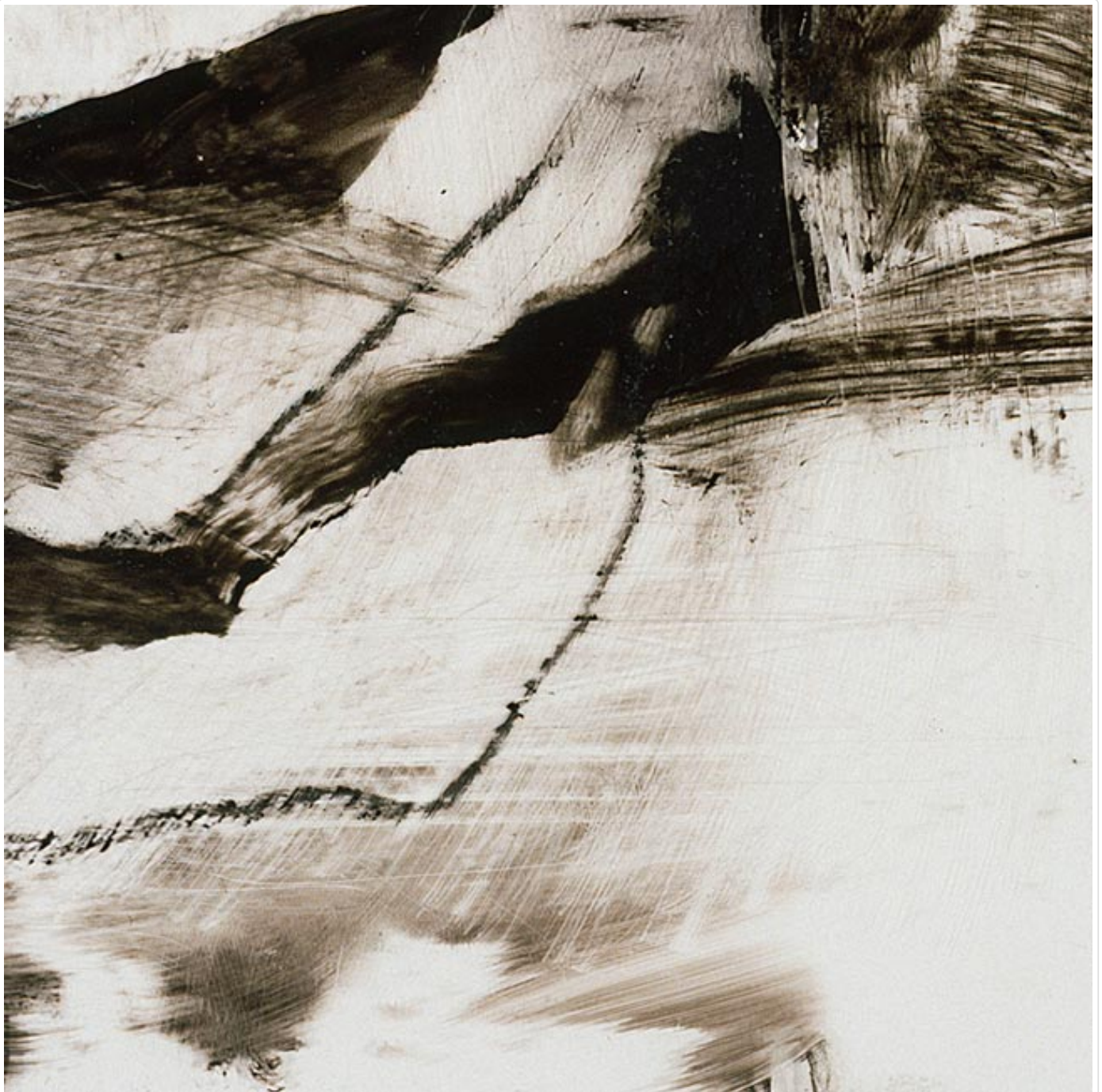
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([/sites/default/files/images/blog/11\\_Drawing-33\\_sandpaper.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/11_Drawing-33_sandpaper.jpg)). The use of a knife, razor blade, or scraper afforded Dine more precise linear scraping, which could be wider or thinner depending on the angle of the tool ([figures 12](/sites/default/files/images/blog/12_Drawing_6_36-combined.jpg) ([/sites/default/files/images/blog/12\\_Drawing\\_6\\_36-combined.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/12_Drawing_6_36-combined.jpg))).



([/sites/default/files/images/blog/10\\_Drawing-2\\_eraser-crumbs.jpg](/sites/default/files/images/blog/10_Drawing-2_eraser-crumbs.jpg))

Figure 10: Detail of adhered eraser crumbs in Glyptotek Drawing [2].



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/11\_Drawing-33\_sandpaper.jpg)

Figure 11: Fine scratches from Dine's use of sandpaper can be seen in this detail of Glyptotek Drawing [33].



(/sites/default/files/images/blog/12\_Drawing\_6\_36-combined.jpg)

Figure 12: Linear scraping appears wider or thinner depending on the angle of the tool; the detail of Glyptotek Drawing [6] on the left shows wider scraping, while the detail of Glyptotek Drawing [36] on the right shows thinner scraping.

Subtracting media is not unique to this series, but rather is a constant for Dine in the creation of drawings. In the past Dine has described a drawing as "something you . . . carve . . . out of the paper rather than laying it on top." This working method typically prescribes the use of thick resilient supports. In the *Glyptotek Drawings*, Dine's main criterion for supports was translucency, which limited their thickness. When using these subtractive techniques on paper supports, Dine worked more delicately to create shallow scrapings. The plastic supports, however, allowed Dine to be more aggressive in his scraping, either removing thin slivers of plastic from the surface or, in some drawings, cutting right through the supports (figure 13 (/sites/default/files/images/blog/13\_Drawing-14\_deep-scraping.jpg)).

### Drawings to Printing Plates

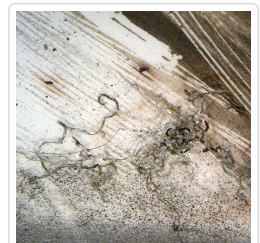
Before starting the *Glyptotek Drawings*, Dine contacted master printer Kurt Zein in Vienna to determine what process would be used to transform his drawings into prints. This would be the first formal project Dine and Zein worked on together. Together, they decided that creating **heliogravures** (<http://www.themorgan.org/collections/conservation/dine/drawings-to-printing-plates.asp#>), using the drawings as the positive transparencies, would best capture the subtle nuances of the drawings that Dine planned to make. This discussion, thus, guided Dine's material choices as described above.

Once Dine completed all forty drawings, he turned them over to Zein to have them transferred to copper printing plates and printed on Zerkall LITHO white mould-made printmaking paper.

Heliogravure is an **intaglio**

(<http://www.themorgan.org/collections/conservation/dine/drawings-to-printing-plates.asp#>)

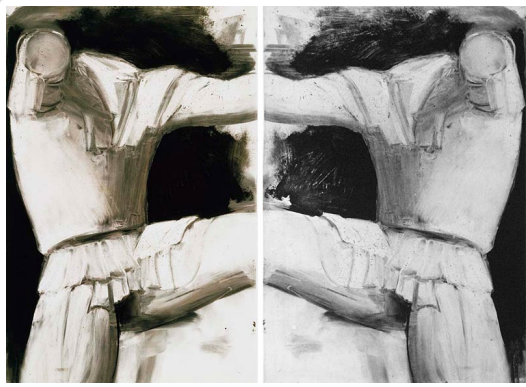
printmaking process, which traditionally uses light in combination with a continuous tone photographic film positive transparency to create an acid-resistant gelatin ground for transfer onto a copper printing plate. To create this ground, the transparency is placed over a photosensitive layer of gelatin and exposed to an ultraviolet-containing light source. Areas of the gelatin that are exposed to light are hardened in proportion to the amount of light that penetrates the transparency, making these areas of gelatin less soluble and more acid resistant. This gelatin layer is then bonded to a plate prepared with an **aquatint grain**, (<http://www.themorgan.org/collections/conservation/dine/drawings-to-printing-plates.asp#>) The plate is then placed in a series of **ferric chloride** (<http://www.themorgan.org/collections/conservation/dine/drawings-to-printing-plates.asp#>) solutions used to **etch** (<http://www.themorgan.org/collections/conservation/dine/drawings-to-printing-plates.asp#>) the surface of the copper and transfer the image from the transparency to the printing plate.



(/sites/default/files/imag  
14\_deep-  
scraping.jpg)

Figure 13: Thin slivers of plastic removed to create highlights in Glyptotek Drawing [14] can be seen still partially attached to the support in this detail.

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(/sites/default/files/images/blog/14\_Drawing-2-vs-Print.jpg)

Figure 14: Glyptotek Drawing [2] on the left with the corresponding heliogravure print on the right.

In the case of the prints seen in *Glyptotek*, the *Glyptotek Drawings* were used in place of the photographic film positive transparency. Heliogravures made in this manner are often referred to as *direct gravures*<sup>vi</sup>, as the step in which the drawing would be photographed to make a positive transparency is eliminated, making the process more direct. To obtain printed images that were the sharpest and most precise representations of Dine's drawings, the drawings were placed face down on top of the gelatin layer. As a result, the heliogravure prints are exact replicas of the drawings, except that they are mirror images of one another (figure 14 (/sites/default/files/images/blog/14\_Drawing-2-vs-Print.jpg)). It is important to note that a small number of the prints are not exact replicas, as Dine sometimes worked in **drypoint** directly on the printing plates to make minor adjustments. Still, the prints are primarily considered heliogravures.

### Drawings as Positive Transparencies

The *Glyptotek Drawings* are an instance in which the ultimate goal of creating a book of prints guided the artist's materials and techniques. Using materials that were readily available and relying on his intuition from years of working with drawing, painting, and printmaking materials, Dine was able to adapt his working methods to this new challenge. The catalog for the first exhibition that included these heliogravure prints, *Jim Dine: Youth and the Maiden and Related Works*, at the Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna, 1989, stated that the drawings were destroyed when the images were transferred to the printing plates. The drawings subsequently surfaced in the 1990 exhibition *Jim Dine: Glyptotek Drawings* at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, revealing that in the end Dine created two works of art: the printed images in *Glyptotek*, and a series of forty drawings that, besides their intended intermediary printmaking function, make up the finished work of art *Glyptotek Drawings*.

### Glossary of Terms

**Aquatint grain:** An overall pattern that is applied to a printing plate to reproduce tone in printed form. This is accomplished by depositing a fine particulate layer of asphaltum or rosin dust on the surface of a printing plate. When exposed to acid, the voids around these particles are etched, creating a series of ink-holding recesses.

**Charcoal:** A black drawing medium that is the carbon by-product of burned wood or other organic materials. Charcoal for drawing is typically sold in two types: wood or vine charcoal — carbonized twigs of wood or vine — and compressed charcoal — ground charcoal compressed into stick form with little or no binder. Wood or vine charcoal tends to have a brown undertone, while compressed charcoal is a denser black.

**Drypoint:** An intaglio printmaking technique in which recessed lines are created directly on the printing plate using sharp metal tools. When printed, drypoint lines have a distinct soft appearance.

**Enamel paint:** A glossy, quick-drying paint that can have an oil or resin binder.

**Etch:** The chemical removal of metal from a printing plate using an acidic solution, such as ferric chloride.

**Ferric chloride:** An acidic solution made by dissolving iron (III) chloride (FeCl<sub>3</sub>) in water. When used to create intaglio printing plates, the ferric chloride eats away, or etches, the exposed areas of the metal printing plate to create ink-holding recesses.

**Graphite:** A naturally occurring silvery-black drawing material that is an allotropic form of carbon. Graphite is mixed with clay to create a variety of hardnesses used as pencil leads or drawing sticks.

**Heliogravure:** An intaglio printmaking process also known as *photogravure*. Traditionally, this process uses light in combination with a continuous tone photographic film positive transparency to create an acid-resistant gelatin ground on a copper printing plate. To create this ground, the transparency is placed over a photosensitive layer of gelatin and exposed to an ultraviolet-containing light source. Areas of the gelatin that are exposed to light are hardened in proportion to the

amount of light that penetrates the transparency, making these areas of gelatin less soluble and more acid resistant. This gelatin layer is then bonded to a plate prepared with an aquatint grain. The plate is then placed in a series of ferric chloride solutions used to etch the surface of the copper to transfer the image from the transparency to the printing plate. In the case of the heliogravure prints in Dine's *Glyptotek*, the *Glyptotek Drawings* were used as the positive transparencies. The elimination of the photographic film positive transparency is often referred to as *direct gravure*.

**India Ink:** A modern, waterproof, black ink that contains a carbon black pigment, shellac, and a borax emulsifier.

**Intaglio:** A category of printmaking processes in which the image is created by recessed lines or textured areas below the surface of a metal plate. These recesses can be achieved by manual removal of the metal or by chemical removal using acid. To print the image, the plate is inked and wiped, leaving ink only in the recessed areas, and then printed onto a damp sheet of paper using a printing press. Characteristically, the printed ink is raised above the surface of the paper and the print often bears a plate mark. Intaglio includes engraving, drypoint, mezzotint, etching, aquatint, and heliogravure.

**Intaglio plate scraper:** A three-sided steel tool used to scrape away unwanted lines or burrs from intaglio plates.

**Kneaded eraser:** A soft pliable eraser that is made of rubber, oil, abrasives, and proprietary ingredients.

**Lithographic crayon:** A black greasy stick used to draw directly onto a lithographic stone or plate. Lithographic crayons contain wax, tallow, soap, natural resin, and lamp-black pigment in varying proportions to produce five to seven hardnesses. Crayons come in the form of square sticks that are approximately two inches long, or the same ingredients can be cast into rods and wrapped in paper to create lithographic pencils.

**Marker:** A drawing instrument with a fiber tip to which a constant supply of ink is supplied from an attached reservoir.

**Pastel:** A soft drawing stick made from finely ground natural or synthetic pigments mixed with a small amount of a water-soluble binder and a filler.

**Spray fixative:** A clear acrylic resin applied as a mist to a work of art with the purpose of adhering friable media. Commercial fixatives are sold in aerosol containers.

**Spray paint:** A liquid paint that is applied as a mist to a substrate. Commercial spray paints are sold in aerosol containers.

## Notes

(i) Conversation with Jim Dine at The Morgan Library & Museum on December 22, 2010.

(ii) Conversation with Jim Dine at The Morgan Library & Museum on December 22, 2010.

(iii) When asked about his subtractive techniques, Dine said that he used the intaglio plate scraper to 'put light into the drawing'. Conversation with Jim Dine at The Morgan Library & Museum on December 22, 2010.

(iv) Conversation with Jim Dine at The Morgan Library & Museum on December 22, 2010.

(v) Quoted in Judith Brodie "A Manner of Speaking" in Judith Brodie and Jim Dine. *Drawings of Jim Dine*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 2004. p. 17.

(vi) Direct gravure is a term used in David Morrish and Marlene MacCallum, *Copper Plate Photogravure: Demystifying the Process*. New York: Focal Press, 2003. p. 148-149. Also see: Sacilotto, Deli. *Photographic Printmaking Techniques*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1982. pp. 108-109.

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Tyne, Lindsey "Jim Dine: Drawing with Light" *Master Drawings* 50.2 (2012): 211-230. Print.

Zein, Kurt, Werkstatt für handgedruckte Originalgraphik. Personal Correspondence, March 2011.

*This post was created in conjunction with the exhibition [Jim Dine: The Glyptotek Drawings](#) ([/exhibitions/jim-dine](#)) ([/exhibitions/jim-dine](#)) on view May 20 through September 4, 2011, organized by Elliott Zooey Martin, Department of Modern and Contemporary Drawings. A version of the essay is published in *Master Drawings* 50.2 (2012): 211-230.*

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## Thaw Conservation Center



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# Jim Dine: The Glyptotek Drawings (</collection/Jim-Dine-The-Glyptotek-Drawings>)

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