

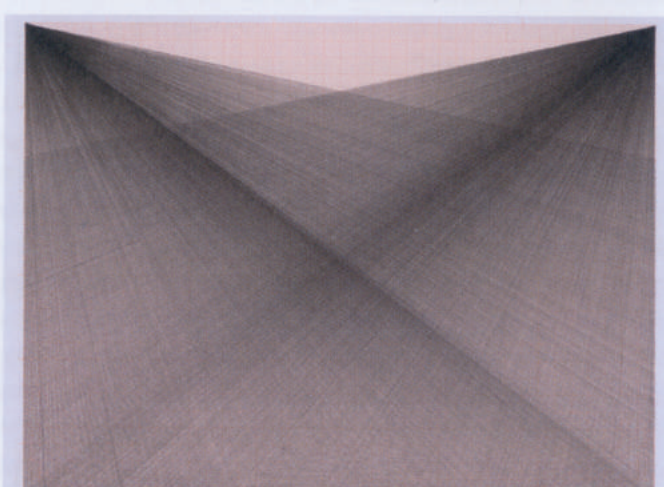
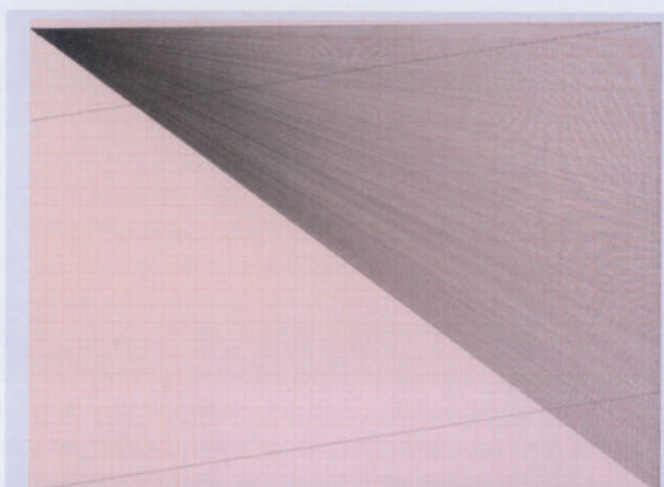
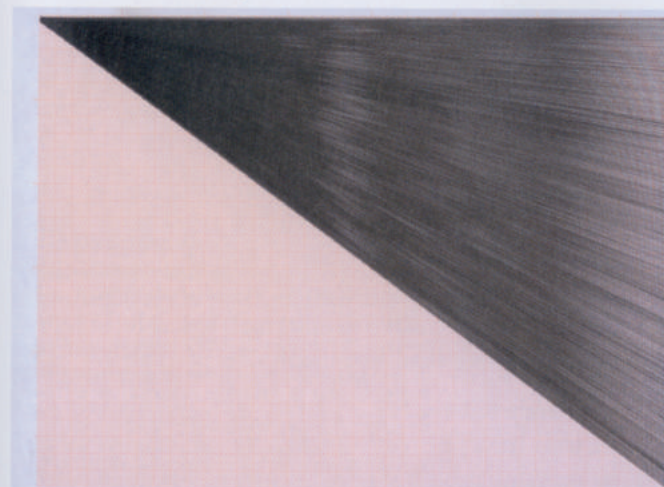
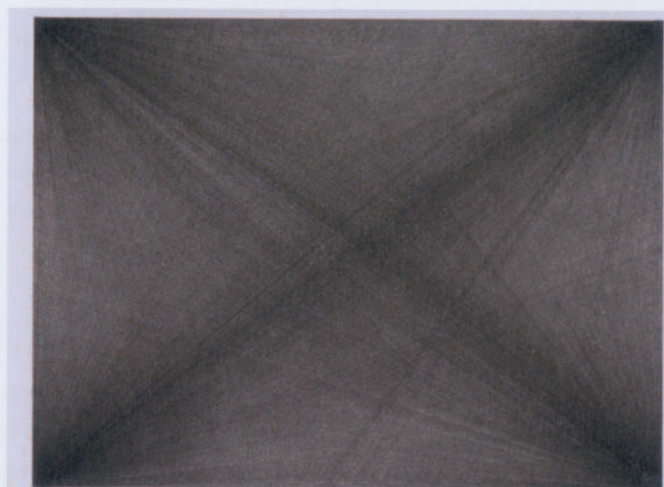
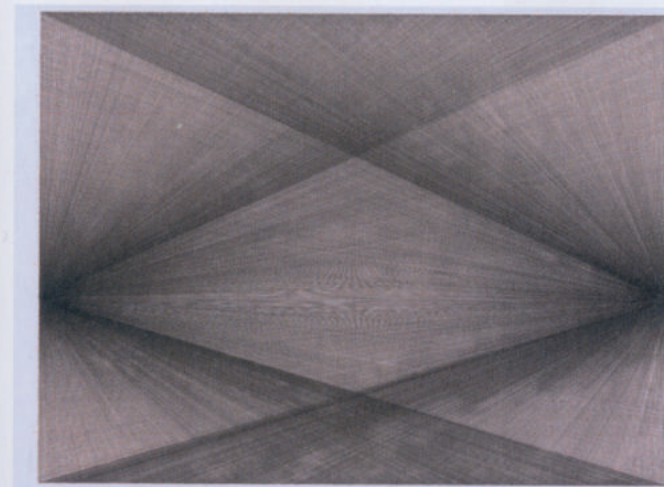
Bar jedweder Spontanität und fern vom Zufall sind die Zeichnungen auf Millimeterpapier (Abb. 4) von Gabi Steinhauser. Und doch tragen auch sie eine elementare Freiheit in sich, die Freiheit, aus dem Moment heraus zu entscheiden, dass die Zeichnung vollendet ist. Dieser Zeitpunkt wird vorher nicht festgelegt, sondern erst im Prozess deutlich.

Dass Steinhauser das Millimeterpapier als Grundlage verwendet, erklärt sich aus ihrer künstlerischen Praxis, für die sie genaue Abmessungen benötigt. Zudem ist es für sich gesehen Ausdruck von Exaktheit, Strenge und Ordnung. Das gerasterte Blatt bringt eine Struktur mit sich, mit der zu verhandeln ist. In der abstrakten Malerei der Moderne besaß das (von Künstlern wie Piet Mondrian geschaffene) Raster eine große Symbolkraft. Seine nicht hierarchische Struktur, die Zersetzung der Fläche und seine Unbrauchbarkeit für eine gegenständliche Bildsprache machten es für Künstler interessant, die nach einer Ausdrucksform für Inhalte suchten, ohne auf Symbole oder andere Bildreferenzen zurückzugreifen.²⁰ Auf dem vorgegebenen Raster nun bestimmt Steinhauser Ausgangspunkte bzw. Zentren, von denen die Linien ausstrahlen, die in immer gleichem, regelmäßigem Abstand – Millimeter für Millimeter – zum Bildrand streben. Aus dem systematischen Vorgehen wachsen die Strukturen. Es entstehen Muster, die trotz der praktischen Strenge eine dynamische Bewegtheit in sich tragen und räumliche Tiefe suggerieren. Der Entstehungsprozess ist langwierig, ähnlich wie bei Malte Spohr, der die Konzentration kennt, die der Ansatz erfordert, Linie für Linie ein Blatt zu füllen. Gesteht Spohr dem zufälligen „Fehler“ ein Bildrecht zu, darf bei Steinhauser keine Linie aus der Reihe fallen. Angesichts dieser unerbittlichen Präzision beginnt man während des Zeichenprozesses, wie Steinhauser erzählt, sich selbst zu hinterfragen. Was treibt einen zu dieser Anstrengung an? Was ist das für eine Ordnung, die man sich auferlegt? Wie geht man mit den bestehenden Verhältnissen um? Schließlich ist das Arbeiten mit Millimeterpapier auch ein Arbeiten mit einem vorgegebenen Maß, welches abgelehnt und durchkreuzt oder bestätigt und ausgebaut werden möchte. Das statische, rötlich getönte Raster besitzt einen anderen Charakter als die aufgetragene Zeichnung, zusammen aber bilden sie dieses Gefüge, bei dem Papiergrund und Zeichnung zu einer dynamischen Einheit verwachsen.

Die Überraschung hält sich während des Zeichnens in Grenzen, denkt man. Gabi Steinhauser aber erzählt, dass sie bei jedem Strich neugierig beobachtet, was die Linie tut, dass sie sich überraschen lässt, was mit der Zeichnung passiert, und erkundet, was der einzelne Strich auslöst, bis zu dem Moment, in dem sie spontan entscheidet, dass der zuletzt gezogene Strich die letzte Veränderung der vorliegenden Zeichnung ist.²¹

Wie bei Spohr ist in der Zeichnung *Line of Beauty* aus dem Jahr 2012 (Abb. S. 105) von Lothar Götz das einzige Element die horizontal gezogene Linie. Und wie bei Spohr und Steinhauser ist diese Technik ausnehmend aufwendig, was Charles Darwent zu der Aussage veranlasste: „Es ist nicht schwer nachzuempfinden, dass da etwas PerverSES an dieser Art zu zeichnen ist, etwas Sisyphushaftes, Selbstzerstörerisches.“²² Bei Götz, der vor allem für seine Wand- und Raummalereien bekannt ist, dränge sich der Gedanke auf, wie viel einfacher es doch gewesen wäre, dieses Bild zu malen.²³ Er malt es aber nicht, sondern zeichnet es. Im Unterschied zu seiner flächigen Malerei herrscht in seiner Zeichnung die Linie vor, die dem Blatt seine divergenten Vektoren gibt, auf denen sich Spannung aufbaut. Waagerechte Linien werden von senkrechten Erscheinungen gekreuzt, die durch einen gemeinsamen Wert der Anfangs- und Endpunkte der Linien auf der Ordinatenachse zum Vorschein kommen. Obwohl das Blatt tatsächlich nur waagerechte Linien aufweist, verschmelzen die Anfangs- und Endpunkte in ihrer Vielzahl zu einer senkrechten Linie. Zwischen zwei solchen senkrechten Linien enden die waagerechten Linien unregelmäßig. Damit sind im Blatt eine klare Rasteraufteilung nach Waagerechter und Senkrechter und ein chaotisches Moment, das die Zwischenräume vibrieren lässt, verbunden, und es scheinen sich verschiedene Ebenen gleichzeitig zu öffnen.

Text passage from
“Zufall und Ordnung”/
“Chance and Order” by
Mechthild Achelwilm (2016)
in: *Zeichnungsräume. Positionen
zeitgenössischer Graphik.* /
*Drawing Rooms. Trends in
Contemporary Graphic Art,*
Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2016,
Kerber Verlag, pp. 112–113. Exh.
cat. dt/engl, Ed. by Hubertus
Gaßner, Petra Roettig und Andreas
Stolzenburg.
With texts by Petra Roettig, Miriam
Schoofs and
Mechthild Achelwilm.
Exhibition Part 1:
30. 4.–30. 10. 2016
Part 2: 25. 11. 2016–21. 5. 2017



4 Gabi Steinhauser
Ohne Titel | Untitled, 2001
12-teilige Serie, Zeichnungen, Pigmenttusche
auf Millimeterpapier | 12-part series, drawings,
pigment ink on graph paper
je | each 297 × 420 mm
Courtesy of the artist

examination of contemporary drawing, which focuses on the collection of the Hamburger Kunsthalle's Department of Prints, Drawings and Photography.

In the search for randomness in art, one is bound to encounter, soon after Marcel Duchamp, the composer John Cage. Cage deliberately used chance as an artistic method, in his music as well as in visual art. His *Ryoanji* series, which he worked on from 1983 until his death in 1992, is based on such "lucky moments". The approximately 150 drawings on horizontal sheets of paper show various circular formations which overlap one another and whose outlines are made up of varying shades of black. Cage created them by circling 15 different stones with a pencil. The extreme horizontal elongation as well as the number of stones used for the drawings refer back to the ancient stone garden of the Ryoanji Temple in Kyoto, which is rectangular and has 15 stones of various sizes arranged on its gravel surface. The "R" in the title of the work *Where R = Ryoanji (2R) 9* from 1983 (fig. p. 56) stands for the 15 stones, and the preceding digit designates the respective number of circles drawn. The next digit counts the number of pencils used. Therefore, for the drawing *Where R = Ryoanji (2R) 9*, Cage circled the stones twice and used nine different pencils of varying degrees of hardness. The artist determined the position of each stone on the paper by questioning the *I Ching*, and later with the help of a computer program, which also was charged with establishing the number of orbits and the choice of the pencil. Thus, a random number generator determines the composition.

This procedure removes the artist as the creative instance; instead, the natural principle, the value of the "chanced upon" form, is the deciding factor. However, chance as principle does not mean that the artist becomes somehow meaningless. Even though chance may shape Duchamp's threads, for example, under conditions prescribed by the laws of nature such as gravity, mass and weight, it is the artist who has the idea to drop the thread and mount it. The artist as impulse-giver remains a necessary part of creating a piece. Consequently, with John Cage it is not chance that is the aim, but rather that which is created when the artist consults chance. "Most people who believe that I'm interested in chance don't realize that I use chance as a discipline. They think I use it – I don't know – as a way of giving up making choices. But my choices consist in choosing what questions to ask."⁴ The answers to his questions about the positions of the stones, the number of times they are circled, and the hardness of the pencil are then decided randomly. Cage provides the framework in which chance can do the drawing.

For Gerhard Richter, the ultimate answer to the question of who retains authorship if the decisions are made by chance, is that he still made the pictures: "The only consolation is that I can tell myself that despite all this I *made* the pictures even when they take the law into their own hands, do what they like with me although I don't want them to, and simply come into being somehow."⁵ Richter places less emphasis on the questions posed by the artist than on the decisions that he, as the artist, has no choice but to make. "Because anyway I am the one who has to decide what they should ultimately look like (the making of pictures consists of a large number of yes and no decisions and a yes decision in the end)."⁶

Bettina Munk takes a cue from Cage's thinking in deciding on the fundamental concept underlying her drawings (fig. 3); chance is for her as well the medium that determines the picture. Cage is to his

stones as Munk is to her stippler, which leaves a round imprint behind when dipped in Japanese ink. The positions of these marks are determined by a roll of the dice, with each value mapped to a point in a system of coordinates. For this purpose, Munk subdivides the page invisibly into six rows and columns along the x and y axes. In the "chip", a rectangle that shows a miniature outline of the sheet in the 6/6 position, that is, the upper right corner, the positions are first recorded with a timecode stamp that includes the date and time of the dice rolls. After the concept is described in the "chip", it is extrapolated to the whole page.

A further stamp that bears the schematised profile of the German female pilot Marga von Etzdorf, her face turned left and thus toward the past, acts as the necessary "observer". Without such an observer, the drawing would have no relevance, "because if nobody asks about the information, it is not there."⁷ Information arises as part of the process, in the questioning; it is not static or retrievable at all times. In these notions of information, one recognises John Cage's theory ("You say: the real, the world as it is. But it is not, it becomes! It moves, it changes! [...] The world, the real is not an object. It is a process."⁸). What's more, Munk's concepts also reflect her interest in quantum physics. She invokes the quantum physicist Anton Zeilinger, who described the discovery of the role of chance in science as one of the most important discoveries of the twentieth century.⁹ Zeilinger argued for not trying to banish chance from our world but to see it as "the source of innovation *par excellence*".¹⁰ Art takes advantage of this source; using chance, artists challenge the unpredictable, forcing them to face up to new things and react to imponderables. The polar opposite of chance, rationality, is such a supervisory authority that it makes humans unpoetic and unimaginative, according to Cage.¹¹

In addition to her drawings on paper, Bettina Munk also designs digital drawings, or gives the impetus for their creation: points randomly scattered by a computer program are connected with vibrating lines through deliberate programming, creating a pulsating web. These digital drawings exemplify the new direction contemporary drawing is moving in: bringing drawing to life with animation, much like the aforementioned video piece *Besuchte Linie auf Granit* (2014) by Sandra Boeschstein.¹²

Bettina Munk's fascination for quantum physics is shared by Malte Spohr,¹³ although his drawings – as chance would have it – take off in a fully different direction (fig. p. 103). They build upon a sequence of horizontal lines drawn with a ruler. Through the use of varying pressure on the pencil and by means of overlaps, layers and omissions, abstract structures begin to come into view that remind one of things past that seem familiar yet fleeting, resembling amorphous natural phenomena such as cloud formations, reflections on the surface of water or cast shadows. These drawings start off with photographs that result from observing natural phenomena, which Spohr then analyses. He reduces the appearance of these first "sketches" on the computer until the photographs lose their objectivity and, with it, their frame of reference. All that remain are "shadows of memory".¹⁴ Anne Buschhoff explains that Spohr is attempting to convey in his drawings the ambivalent feeling of recognition coupled with an inability to comprehend that observing nature evokes in him.¹⁵ Planning corresponds with unpredictability. "I do decide that I want to draw this line, and I also decide to do it on certain paper in a

certain size, with a ruler and a soft pencil. How the line decides to act, though, and what it will look like, I can't plan that entirely."¹⁶ He only has limited control over the stroke of the soft pencil (9B), for example; occasionally he will unconsciously apply too much pressure and the line will become darker, which then steers the drawing in a different direction. Spohr does not try to rein in the piece from taking on a life of its own, but instead allows it to participate in its own creation. His defined yet undefinable drawings suggest clear parallels with quantum physics, more specifically the notion of quantum superposition, in which a quantum particle can be in more than one state at the same time. This simultaneity can also be seen in the parallelism of strong conceptualism and free randomness.

When the New York artist Jill Baroff makes the form of her *Tide Drawings* (fig. 6, figs. pp. 128 f.) dependent on the water levels in port cities, then, just like Bettina Munk or John Cage, she surrenders her artistic authority with respect to the composition of her images to indeterminacy. However, her decision is incumbent upon the choice of location and the limited timespan, which are crucial factors in the form taken by the drawings. The *Tide Drawings* are concentric circles that Baroff draws with a compass, usually with red, blue or black pigmented ink on gampi paper. The line spacing of the circle formations, their colour concentrations and size are irregular, depending on the observed period of time as well as intractable parameters such as weather conditions and the geological character of the chosen sites. The lower the water level, the closer together the circles are and the more concentrated the colour appears. A regular ebb and flow of the circle density in *Tide Drawing: Hamburg (autumn)* (fig. p. 129) reflects the regular rhythm of the tides of the Elbe River, a cycle of about six hours. In contrast, in *Tide Drawing: Hamburg (surge)*, dense dark passages that disrupt a steady cycle document the arrival of the hurricane Xaver in 2013, which caused a storm surge in Hamburg.¹⁷ For Baroff, the process of drawing already starts with deciding the where and when, long before anything is visible on paper; the conceptual phase is in full swing before drawing even starts.

The artist then torpedoed the regularity of the circles again when she cuts out individual fine lines with a scalpel and breaks them out of the circular shape, as she did in *Tide Drawing: Hamburg (winter)* (fig. p. 128). The water bath the artist soaks her drawings in before mounting them on white paper separates single lines from the round shape, twisting them into playful contortions and leading to suspenseful bends in the paper strips that confound the regular concentric order. *Tide Drawing: Hamburg (bud)*, finally, displays nothing but a small, concentrated jumble of lines. It was created when Baroff crushed the circular web of lines and crumpled it into a ball in the water bath, afterward spreading it out and mounting it flat on white cardboard. Thus, an active, almost destructive act brings forth a drawing, and Baroff undermines her own rules by destroying a shape determined by empirical data. How the lines deform during such an act is scarcely controllable; the results are "formed from the interplay of chance and control".¹⁸

This breaking with the ranks of order can likewise be seen in Spohr and Munk – it's human, some might say. Spohr allows himself the freedom to respond to imponderables, and Munk gives herself a bit of wiggle room to place the stippler in her system of coordinates, just as she chooses the pigment density of her ink. The relationship of law to lawlessness and to freedom fascinates Munk. She describes

it as an "open system".¹⁹ Baroff, too, operates in an open system when she frees the defined lines with a scalpel.

Bereft of any spontaneity and far from random are the drawings on graph paper (fig. 4) by Gabi Steinhauser. And yet they, too, harbour an elementary freedom within them: the freedom to decide from one moment to the next that the drawing is complete. This point in time is not established beforehand but only becomes known during the process.

Steinhauser's choice of graph paper as picture support can be explained by her artistic practice, in which she requires exact measurements. At face value, it is also an expression of precision, rigour and order. The grid sheet offers a structure that can be negotiated with. In modern abstract painting, the grid (created by artists such as Piet Mondrian) resonated with great symbolic power. Its non-hierarchical structure, the fragmentation of the surface and its uselessness for representational imagery made it interesting for artists searching for a means of expressing content without relying on traditional symbols or other image references.²⁰ Steinhauser for her part selects starting points or centres on the predetermined grid from which the lines radiate outwards, striving towards the edge of the page in unchanging, uniform increments – millimetre by millimetre. The structure of the composition grows from this systematic approach. Patterns emerge that convey a sense of dynamic motion despite the practical rigour, suggesting depth. The production process is prolonged, similar to that of Malte Spohr, who is well aware of the high degree of concentration it takes to fill an entire page line by line. Whereas Spohr concedes the right of random "mistakes" to remain in the picture, for Steinhauser every line must have its place. In the face of this relentless precision, Steinhauser relates, one begins to question oneself during the drawing process. What drives me to undertake such an effort? What kind of order is it that I am imposing on myself? How do I deal with the existing conditions? In the end, working with graph paper is also working with a predetermined gauge that wants to either be denied and thwarted or confirmed and elaborated upon. The static, reddish grid has a different character than the drawing applied to it, but together they form a synergy that melds the paper support and drawing into one dynamic unit.

There shouldn't be many surprises while drawing, one would think. But Gabi Steinhauser says that she curiously watches each stroke to see what the line will do, that she enjoys her own surprise at what is happening with the drawing, exploring what a single line can lead to up until the moment when she spontaneously decides that the last line she drew will be the last change made to the drawing.²¹

As with Spohr, the drawing *Line of Beauty* from 2012 (fig. p. 105) by Lothar Götz has as its only element the horizontal line. And as with Spohr and Steinhauser, the artist's technique is exceptionally labour-intensive, moving Charles Darwent to remark: "It's hard not to feel that there's something perverse about this way of drawing, something Sisyphean, self-defeating."²² With Götz, who is best known for his wall and room murals, one can't help but think how much easier it would have been for him to just paint the picture.²³ Yet he does not paint it. He draws it. In contrast to the broad planes of colour in his paintings, the line rules in his drawings, lending the page its divergent vectors, in which tension builds. Horizontal lines are crossed by vertical apparitions, which are revealed by a common value shared by the start and end points of the lines on the ordinate axis. Although the sheet actually only shows horizontal lines, the start and end