

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity,  
School of Art, Art History and Design

Art, Art History and Design, School of

---

4-2018

# Time and Lines

Richard Pecos Pryor

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, pecos.pryor@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents>



Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), [Illustration Commons](#), [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#), and the [Printmaking Commons](#)

---

Pryor, Richard Pecos, "Time and Lines" (2018). *Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design*. 134.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents/134>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art, Art History and Design, School of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

**DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln**

---

Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity,  
School of Art, Art History and Design

Art, Art History and Design, School of

---

4-2018

# Time and Lines

Richard Pecos Pryor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/artstudents>

---

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Art, Art History and Design, School of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Student Creative Activity, School of Art, Art History and Design by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

TIME AND LINES

by

Richard Pecos Pryor

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the supervision of Professor Francisco Souto

Lincoln, Nebraska

April, 2018

## TIME AND LINES

Richard Pecos Pryor, M.F.A.

University of Nebraska, 2018

Advisor: Francisco Souto

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” -Annie Dillard

I want to make art that is worthwhile, that shares something important. This desire often overwhelms and hinders me from starting projects. I find myself questioning the purpose of art altogether. Yet, once I relinquish control into action—just simply start and keep going—the unforeseen meaning eventually presents itself.

Drawings begin with lines. Partnered with curiosity, I began this series by exploring the potential of drawing materials. How far and for how long can a single sharpened pencil last? What does a mile of lines look like? These curiosities parallel my life's larger questions: how many years will I have with my parents? What do I want to do for the rest of my life? As time is the border of a life, I have used distance and duration as the self-prescribed parameter for these images. The various expressions of time and distance are a metaphor for our mortality and most of all, our potential.

These works are created through repetitive actions and many are slowly developed over extended periods of time. My mind often follows the cadence of my body into a state of meditation. Reflecting on a lifespan, the journey of art-making becomes an aid to awareness and gratitude.

The process is the impetus—time, distance, and materials become means to explore the significance of the rituals of everyday life. In search for meaning, I’ve found that the spectacular occurs within life’s natural procession.

\* \* \*

*Time and Lines* consists of ten variations of the distance of one mile and five art objects that use increments of time as their departure point. The “A Mile of Lines” pieces include the printmaking processes of etching, drypoint, stone lithography as well as a weaving, photo book, colored pencil drawing, graphite rubbing, an unprinted relief wood block and the collected wood shavings from this carving. The time pieces are primarily drawings with graphite and colored pencil in addition to a photograph and a sculpture made of used coffee grounds.

It was important to use a multitude of art making methods because each one offers a different experience while making and viewing. These processes inform the varying concepts and give the viewer multiple entry points to ruminate on the central themes inspired by daily life. For example, I intended the two lithographs “A Mile of Lines II” to depict a meditative experience from a mundane repetitive movement. They are made by drawing with a grease crayon on a smooth stone. If one were to make an abrupt stop while drawing the lines and backtrack over the preceding lines, the pigment would lift up resulting in a high contrasted blank spot. This would be an unwanted break in the line, distracting the viewer from the work’s subtle nature. Therefore I overlapped the lines

using an elongated infinity symbol by slowly moving down the rectangular shape, which resulted in an overall calm image.

This piece serves as a juxtaposition to “A Mile of Lines IV” which I created with vertical drypoint lines. These lines are made by physically scratching into the surface of a metal plate with a sharp metal stylus. The grooves and the burr created from the displaced metal hold a large quantity of ink which is transferred to paper through the printmaking press. These bold lines intend to create an aggressive and sorrowful expression, reflecting the often-unseen parts of my human experience.

Depicting the unseen is an interest and enjoyable challenge I often seek. Distance and time are increments of measurement that rarely have physical manifestations. A lifespan of an individual is also something un-viewable in a moment. Portrait photographs are often used by family members to remember a loved one. I use the condensed image of an un-viewable measurement, like “a mile of lines,” as a stand-in for a life. Their variations become mirrors to aid in contemplation and reflect the complexities of living.

One of the first drawings I made of a mile of lines was with my Dad’s mechanical pencil. The drawing took time. A time defined by a distance. When I reached that prescribed distance, the drawing was over. My Dad will stop working one day, then he will rest, then pass away to the unknown. The distance of his life is defined by a finite amount of time. This piece was a meditation, a prayer, an ode, an acknowledgment of his numbered day—a reminder to enjoy the time we have together.

In order to reflect on my own life during a particularly hard season, I wove the poncho “A Mile of Lines: Woven.” Ponchos are designed to be a multi-use garment: They are worn for comfort, laid out on the ground for rest, and tied up as a shelter. I metaphorically need all these. The color blue was most fitting because of how Rebecca Solnit writes of it in her book *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. In her chapter titled *The Blue of Distance*, Solnit describes blue as the color of desire. Bodies of water and the sky are blue, but water in a cup or a breeze are clear and invisible. When looking at mountains in the distance, they appear blue, which makes you want to go there and stand in that light. Once you get there, it is no longer blue. It is the mountain you left in the distance that is now blue. Renaissance painters loved to use this visual trick by depicting the faraway towns, sheep and people in blue pigment. It set them back and created a sense of longing for that place. Mary was often painted in a blue cloak which invoked desire. Likewise I wanted to cloth myself in the faraway, in desire, a kind of self love.

It is the accumulation of water and sky that turn into the beautiful hues of blue. This kind of accumulation brings me to another key interest in my artwork: the significance that arises from collecting or grouping the common things of our daily lives. When poet Naomi Shihab Nye was asked in an interview why she writes about common things, she responded with the question: “what do you have in your life?” Like many, I begin each day by sitting and drinking a cup of coffee. I let my mind wander in the smell, sounds and young light. I begin each studio session by sharpening my pencils and making simple drawings—often of the fruit I will snack on to get me from one meal to the next.

The “Months” drawings, “Sustenance: One Year,” “Two Years,” and “Three Years” are inspired by these rituals.

Each sheet of paper in “Months” is left on my studio desk for a month at a time. It collects my test marks, thoughts, calculations and serves as a surface to finely hone my drawing utensils. Individually and cumulatively these works become a physical manifestation of time. The other time titled pieces share this quality. In addition to their conceptual meanings, I find them aesthetically pleasing. That is why I choose not to include the pile of detritus swept up from my studio floor I’ve saved the last couple years.

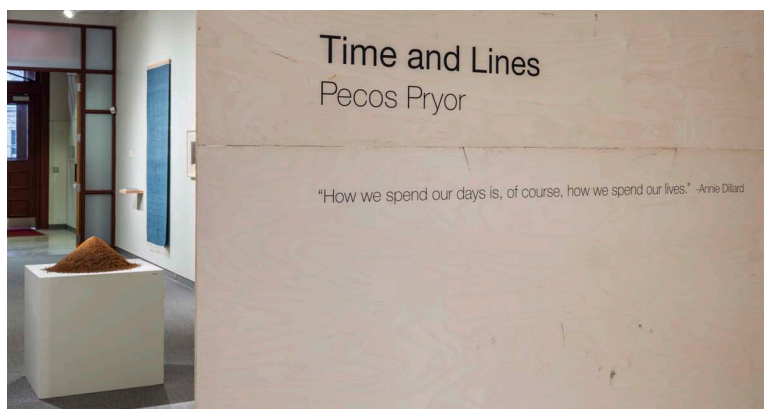
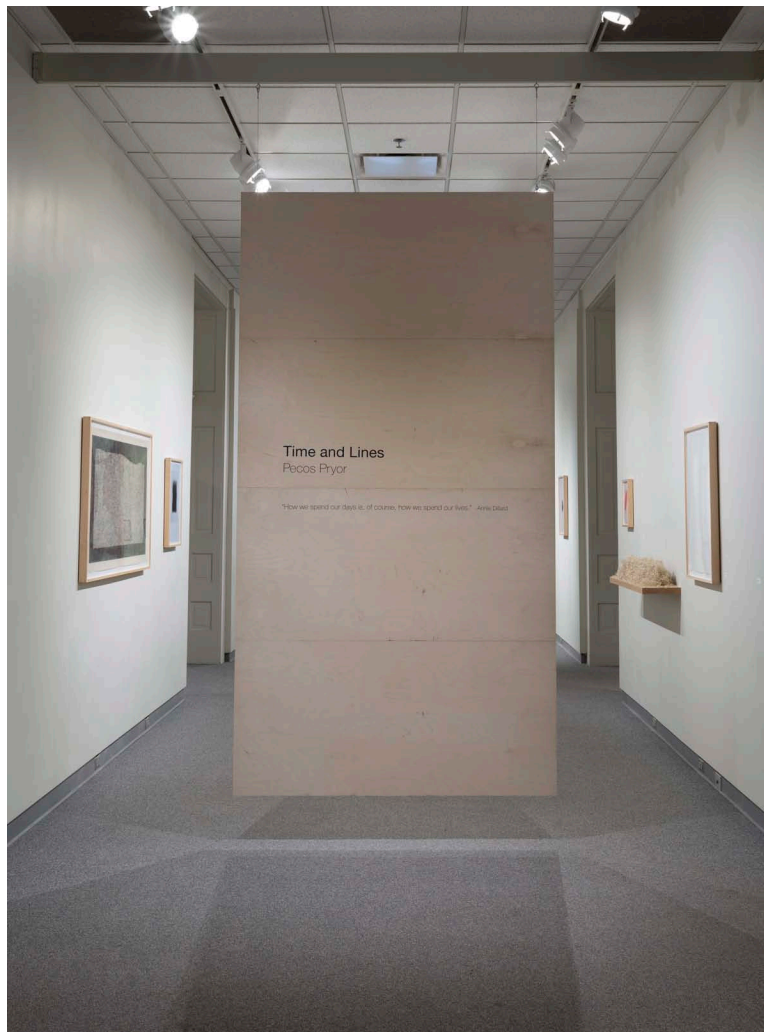
Although I do not think the amount of time spent on a work of art determines its significance, the piece that accumulated the most making-hours is “A Mile of Lines: Carved.” Using my smallest U gouge, I began this piece with a single straight carved line. I carved the next line as close as possible to the one below it without carving into the already gouged space. The lines stack to almost 9 feet tall. Whenever I would mess up and carve into the preceding line, I would just carve back out and continue. As I followed parallel to that jump in the line, a ripple would begin. These ripples scatter across the whole piece giving it a water like appearance. It is this kind of visual surprise that teaches me the beauty of life’s un-plannable nature.

This piece and the other distance pieces are highly calculated to be accurate. But with the natural curves and actions of the hand, if measured out, the lines would actually be much longer, exceeding the distance of one mile. I love this divergence of intent and outcome. It is more authentic, closer to the nuanced truths we all experience.

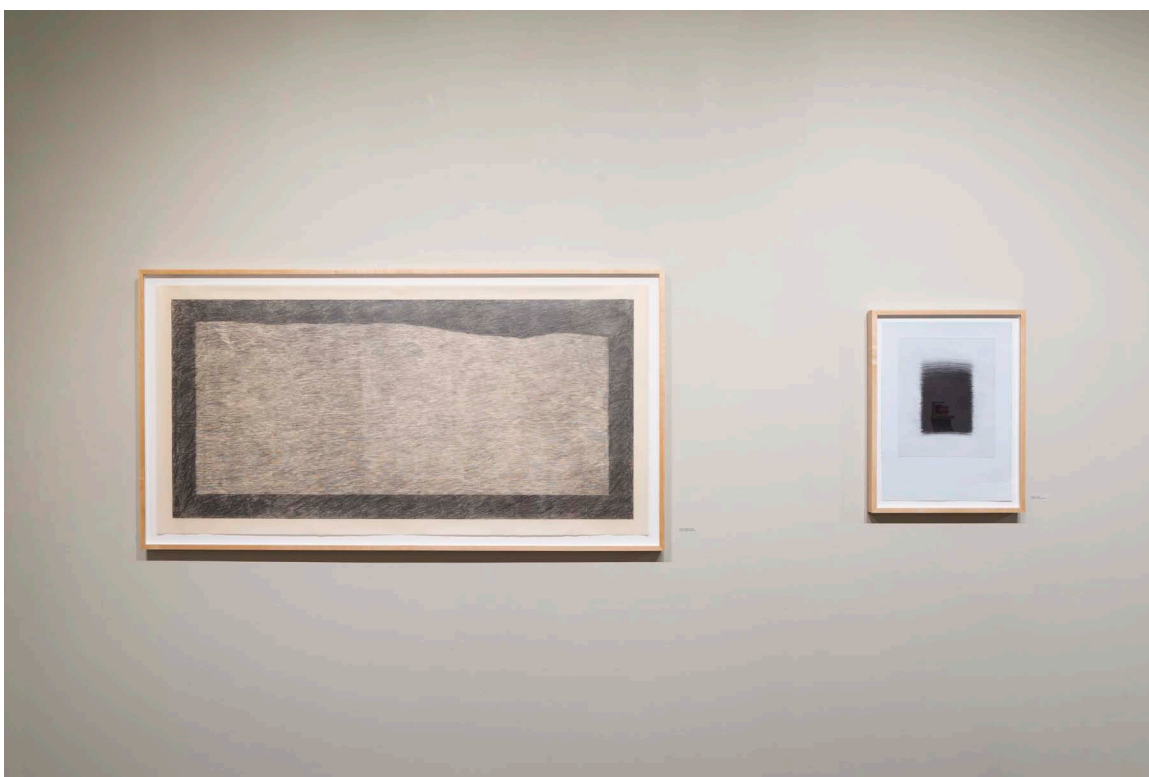


I use to be overwhelmed to make something that was “good” and wanted so badly to share a particular meaning I thought was a worthy message. With the help of many perspectives, I abandoned this motive long ago. As described in some detail above, I still have intentions, concepts and ideas I hope to share. But I now believe that the viewer is just as creative as the artist. This art has taught me daily about the nature of being, may it now partner with the viewers own experience, become their own, and grow beyond what I could have conceived.

## Thesis Exhibition



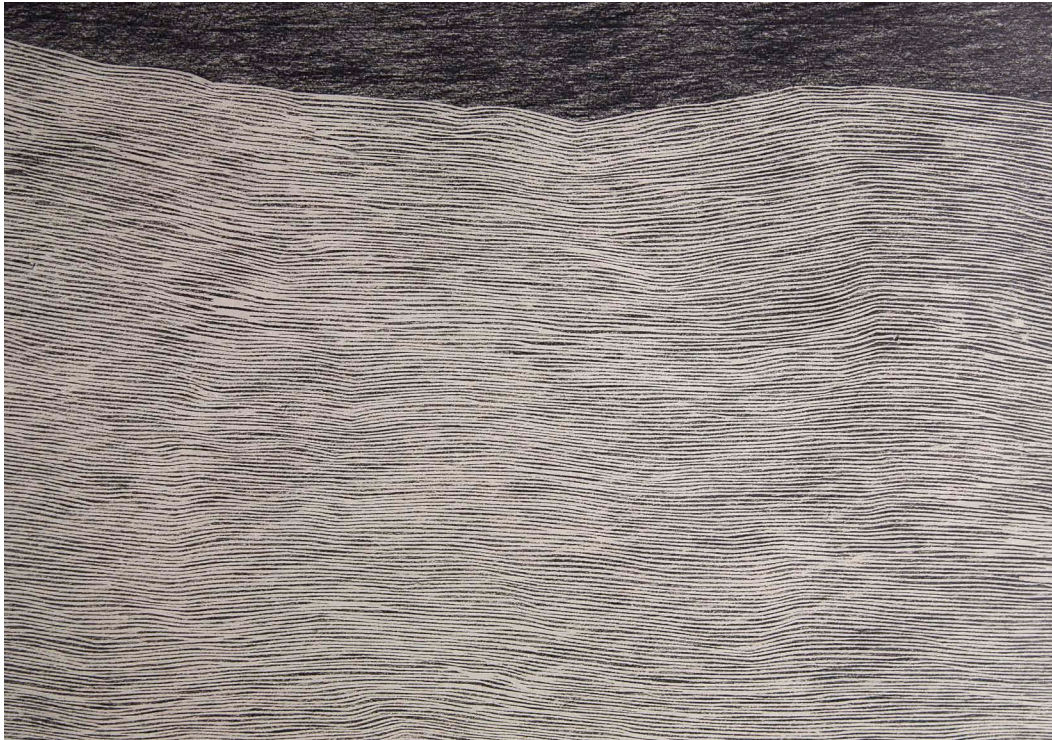




**A Part of a Mile of Lines**  
 graphite rubbing on Kitikata paper  
 30.75"x60.75"  
 2017

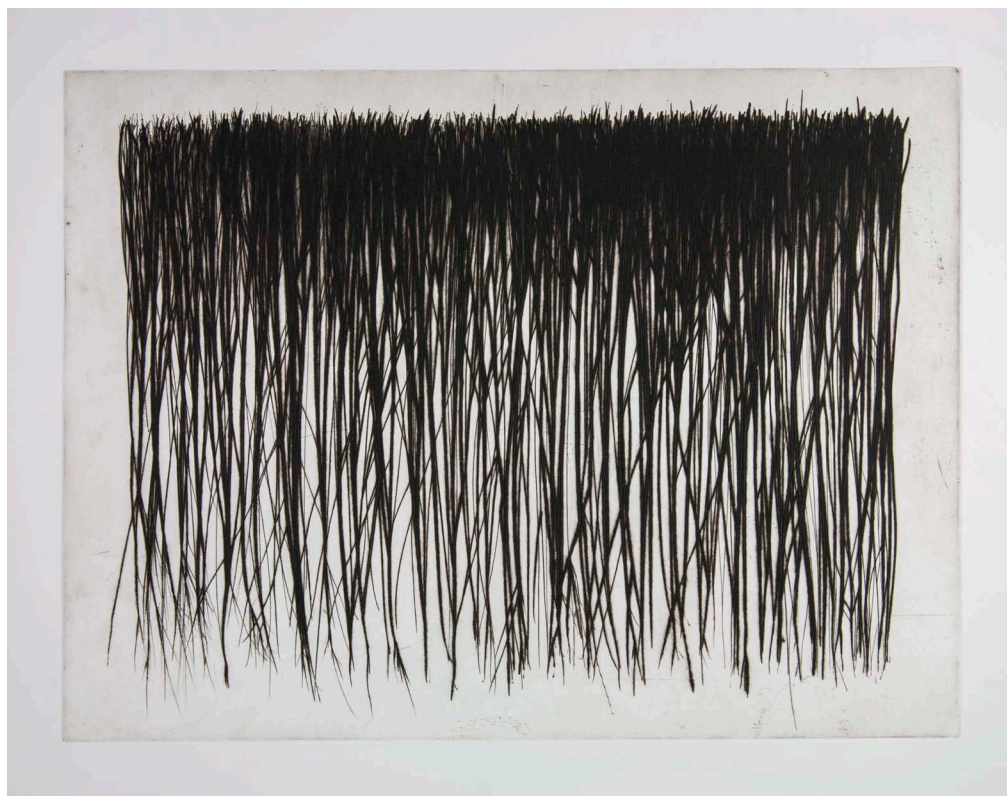
**A Mile of Lines**  
 etching on blue Pescia paper  
 edition size: 8  
 22"x16"  
 2017





A Part of a Mile of Lines (detail)





**A Mile of Lines IV**  
drypoint etching on  
BFK paper  
edition size: 3  
39.25"x31.25"  
2018





**Sustenance: One Year (detail)**  
colored pencil and graphite on BFK paper  
56.25"x30.25"





**A Mile of Lines: Woven**  
photo book  
edition size: 20  
7"x7"  
2018





**A Mile of Lines: Woven**

Lambs Pride wool, Navajo warp wool, maple, brass  
95"x47"  
2018

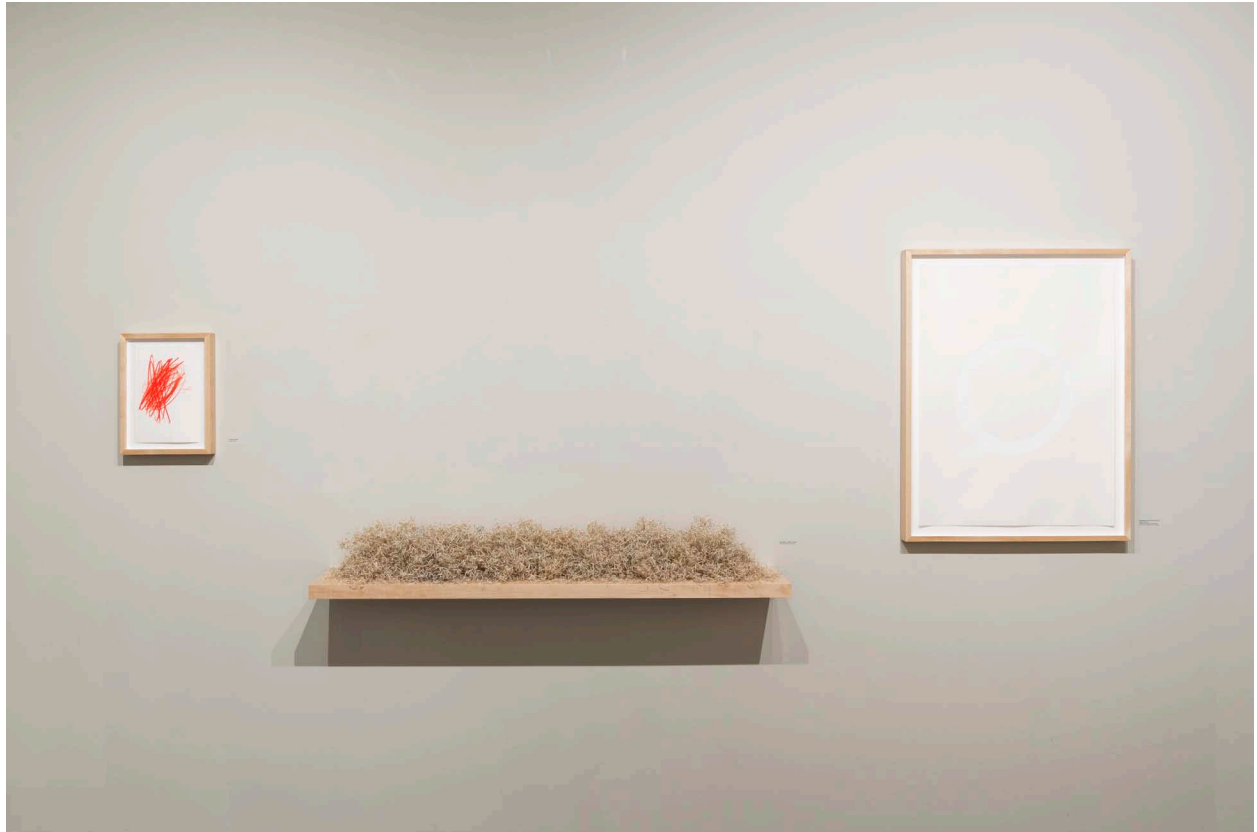


**Two Years**  
archival pigment print  
edition size: 20  
23.5"x16.5"  
2018



**Three Years**  
used coffee grounds  
10"x30"x30"  
2016-2018



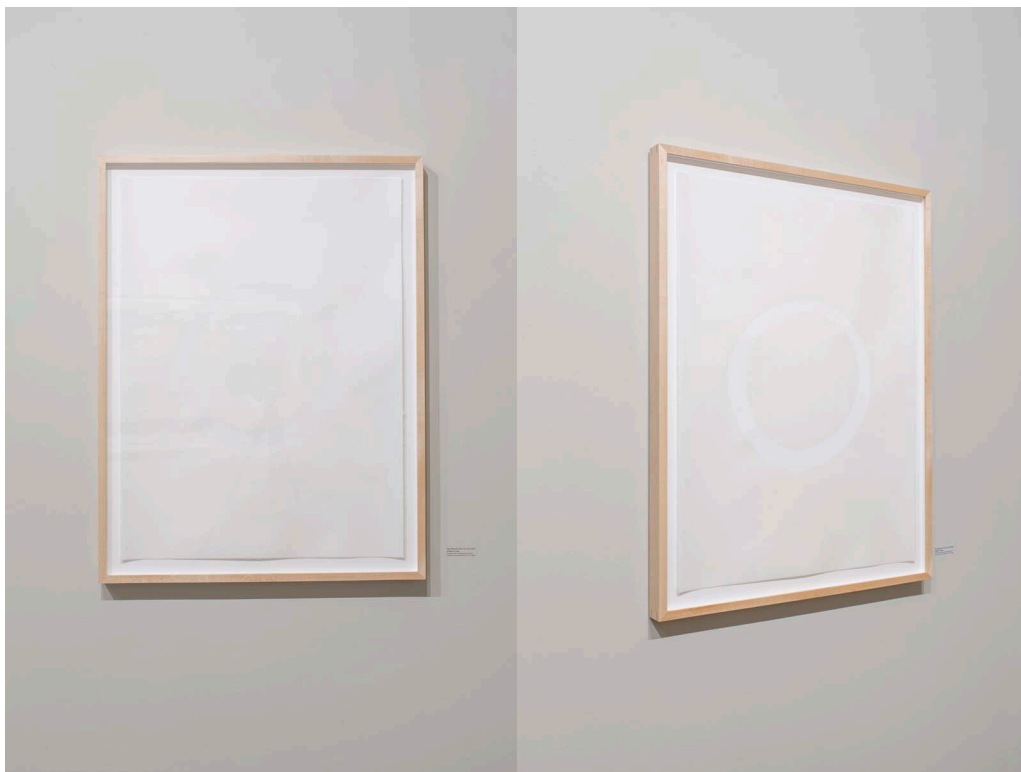


**6.88 Seconds**  
colored pencil  
11"x7.5"  
2017

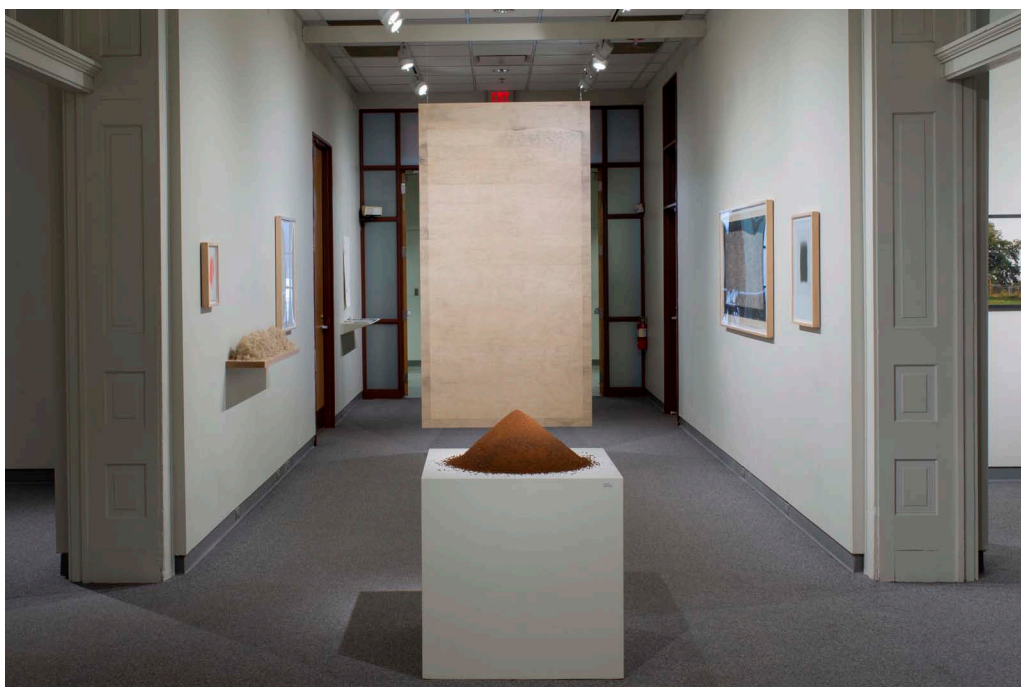


**Remnants: A Mile of Lines**  
wood shavings on maple shelf  
7.5"x51"x9.25"  
2018



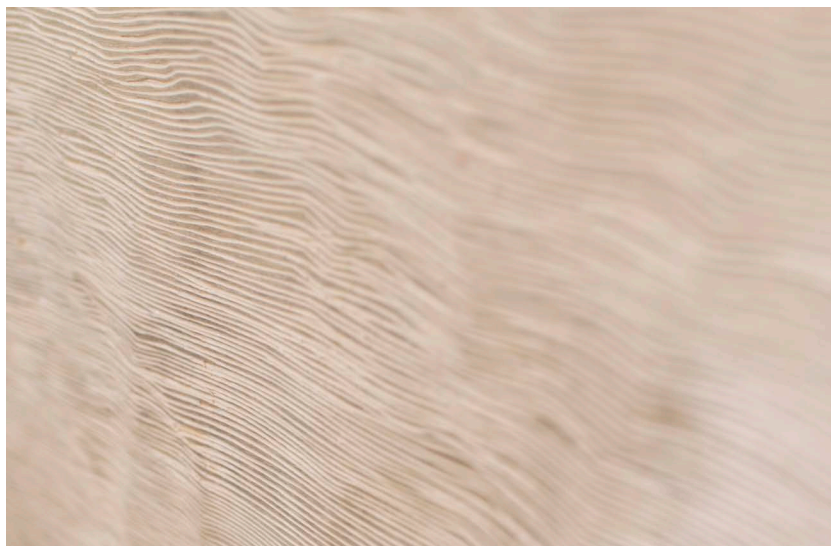


**"No Moment That You Can Hold":  
A Mile of Lines**  
colored pencil on gampi surface paper  
song lyrics from Moments by Truly Happy  
30"x22.5"  
2018

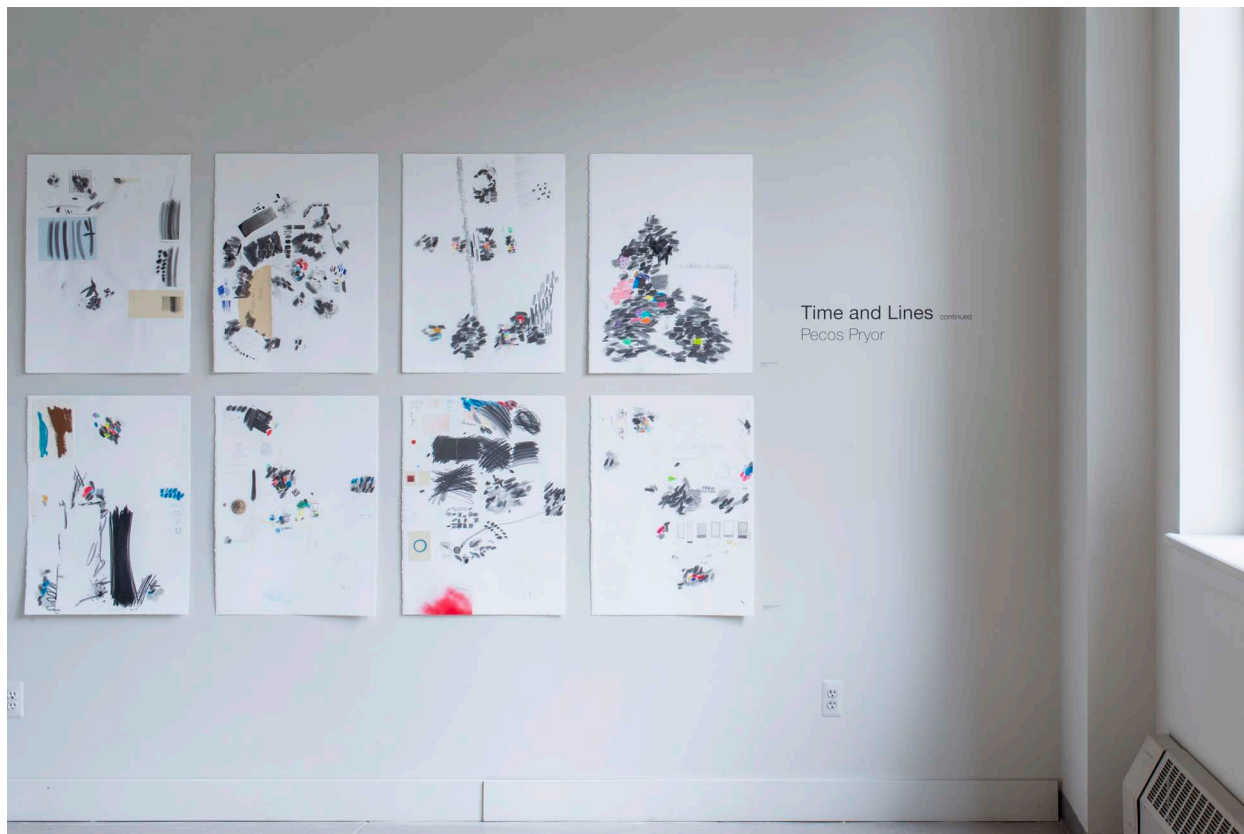




**A Mile of Lines: Carved**  
wood relief carving  
108"x57"  
2018



**A Mile of Lines: Carved**  
(detail)



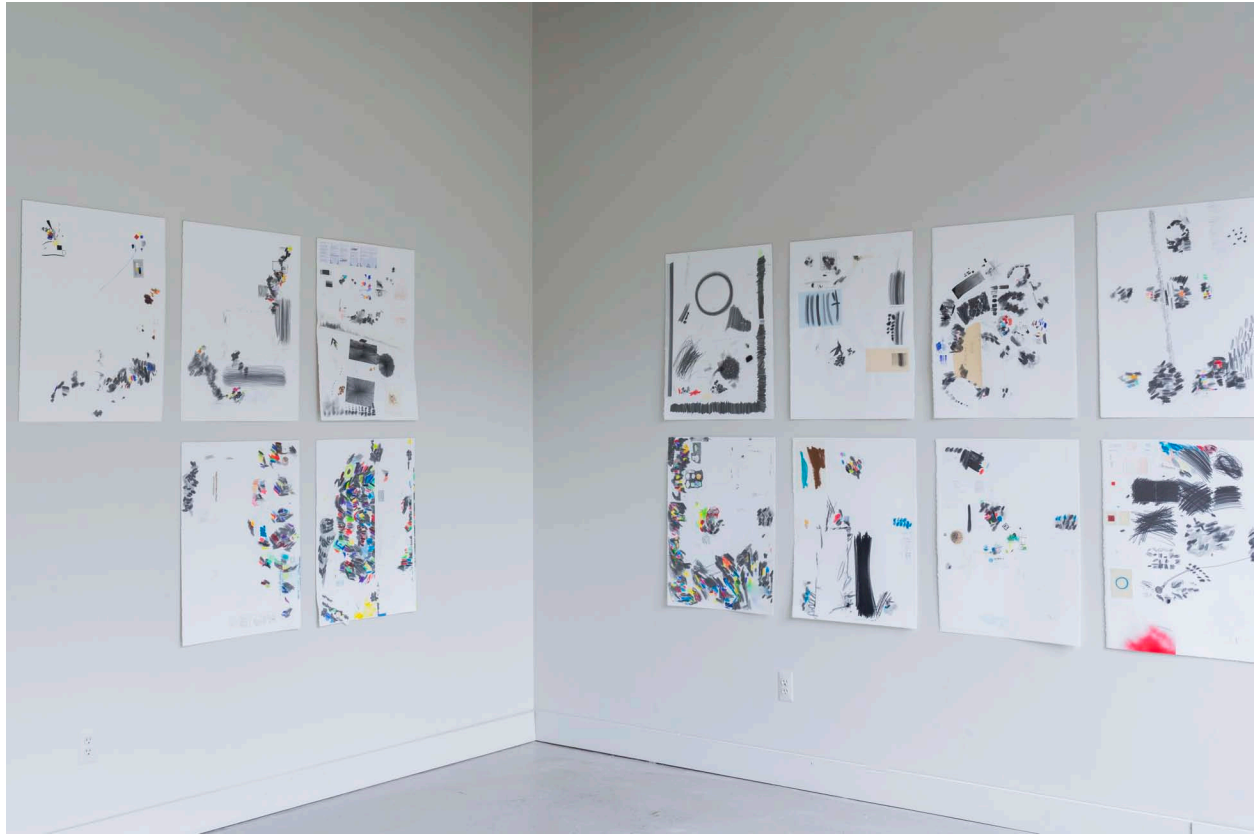
**September 2016 - August 2017**

Top row, right to left  
mixed media

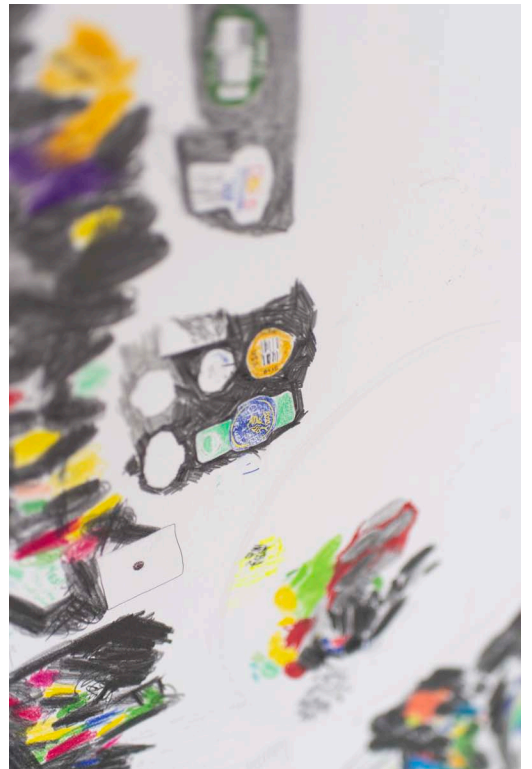
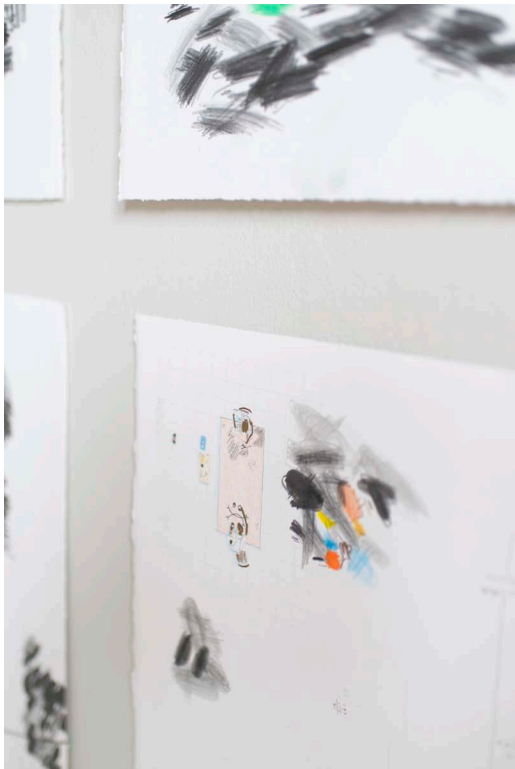
**September 2017 - August 2018**

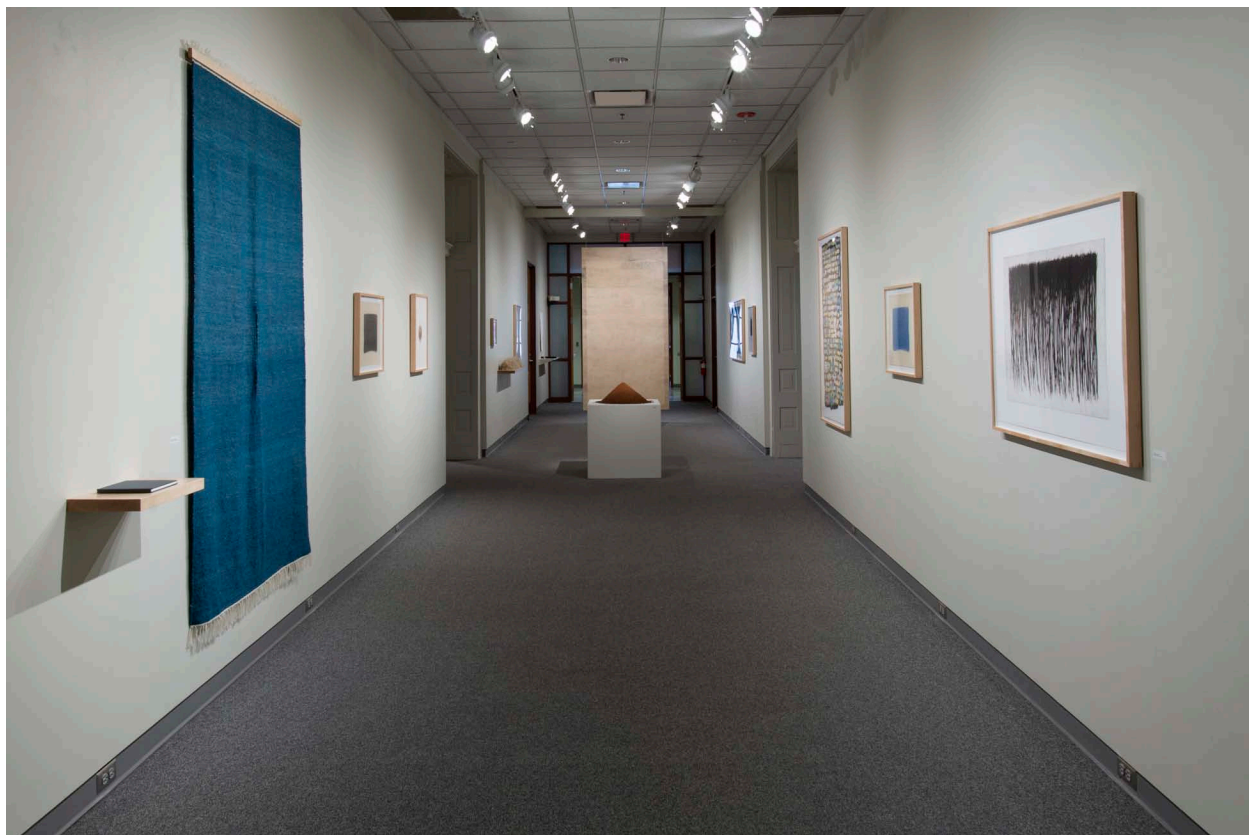
Bottom row, right to left  
mixed media

\*Each 30"x22" sheet is left on my desk for a month to hone drawing materials, collect test marks, and thoughts.









## Time and Lines

Exhibition  
Eisentrager-Howard Gallery  
Lincoln, NE  
April 20th, 2018

Thank You