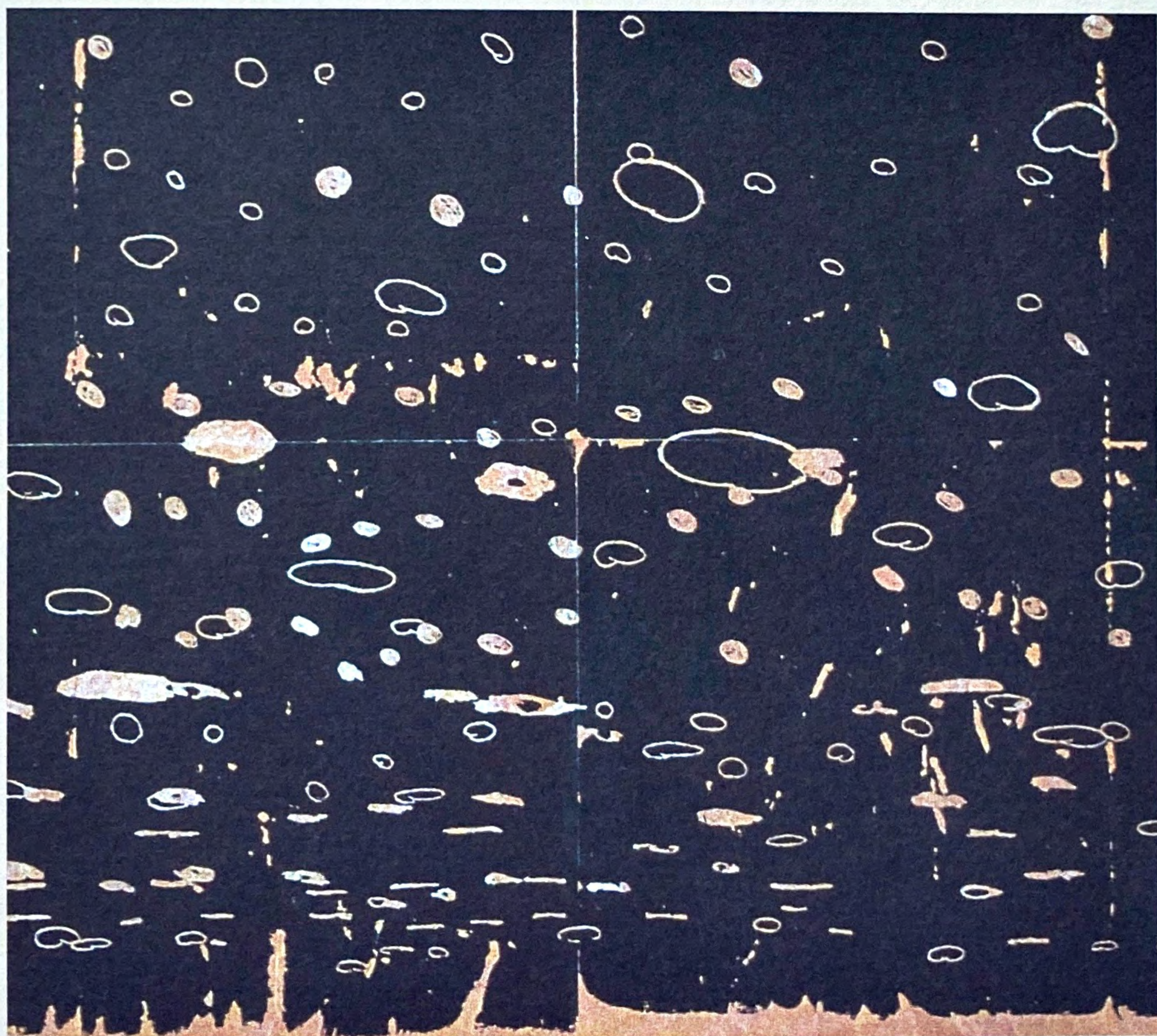


audio visual:

drawings by Annette Lawrence



September 25 – December 8, 2002

audio visual:

drawings by

Annette

Lawrence

Annette Lawrence spent much of the seventh year of her life sitting in her neighbor's apartment taking piano lessons. She did not learn how to play the piano. Instead, she learned to repeat the motions of her teacher, placing her hands in certain positions on the keys and moving from note to note. Homework assignments required the student to identify keys by the letter they represent in a system of writing and to draw notes on a music staff.

Ms. Lawrence describes the physical environment of her piano lessons as "large and heavy," quite unlike the light, improvisational quality of her recent drawings. The works that comprise the exhibition *audio visual: drawings by Annette Lawrence* are, however, manifestations of those lessons. The

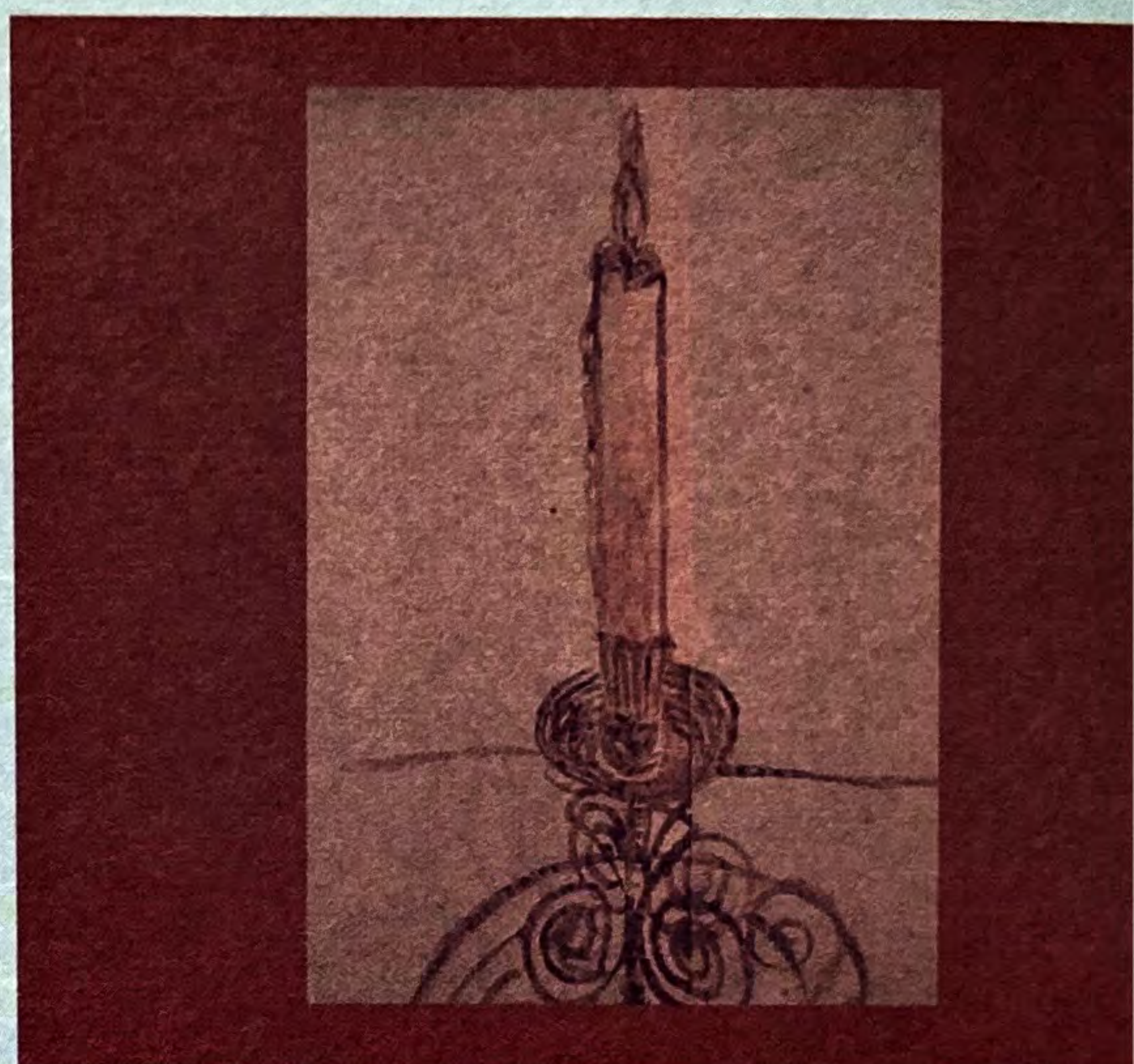
seemingly simple and subtle compositions display the effects of a piano student's repeated gestures—lines or circles populate a drawing on butcher paper. They also speak (or perhaps more appropriately, re-write) the language of music—the rigid, horizontal lines of a music staff recede into the whiteness of common office paper. Most importantly, the drawings in *audio visual* investigate the privileging of visual over aural information. They question an approach to music that depends on logic and order by literally bending and twisting music's visual vocabulary. They reveal the aesthetics of written sound by liberating notes and lines from the strict and severe structure of the music staff.

The simplicity and subtlety of Ms. Lawrence's drawings contradicts their complex processes and conceptual foundations. The artist's drawing process often involves light projection and photocopying, thus allowing her to flatten the appearance of notes and letters until they seem to lie down and curve into themselves. In many cases, she photocopies directly from the piano lesson workbook she used as a child. For *Untitled Black #2* (2001), she transforms a series of whole notes from full, round circles at the top of the page into narrow, oblong shapes and finally into thin lines at the bottom of the page. She further manipulates the image by creating a negative of the common music sheet: a heavy, black background presses white whole notes into silence. Ms. Lawrence reconfigures the pristine, disinterested music of her early piano lessons into a passionate and subjective gesture. *Untitled Black #2* looks the way music *feels*. The notes are irregular and restless, their tempo unpredictable.

The artist also reconfigures notions of time and meter, for the language of music is the language of time. Symbols and notes and lines act as minute and second hands counting out beats. In *audio visual*, however, the precise counting of a metronome is figuratively bent, inverted, and warped. For example, in a group of small drawings entitled *Isolated Lines* (2001), the artist collapses the lines of a music staff onto each other until they slowly disappear. Empty spaces interrupt and eventually overwhelm the beats normally communicated on a music staff.

audio visual includes earlier drawings that betray a similar interest in the passage of time. The “Candle Drawing Series” (1999) consists of ten drawings created once a month during the artist’s menstrual cycle and drawn with the artist’s own menstrual blood. Each month, Ms. Lawrence lit the same candle and drew it as it melted; the flow of the wax prevented her from capturing a fixed moment. While the artist glanced from the candle to the drawing paper, the movement of the melting wax changed the appearance of the candle. As a result, each drawing depicts the candle in several consecutive stages at once—an impossible “snapshot.” The series is an elaborate examination of the futile attempt to capture time, communicated simultaneously through the melting candle, the process of drawing the melting candle, and the cycles of the artist’s body. Though an apparent “still life,” the “Candle Drawing Series” is quite the opposite: an image in and of flux.

Ms. Lawrence’s time-centered works are reminiscent of Hanne Darboven’s



calendrical counting journals, with the hand of the artist emphasized in wavy, calligraphic line. The grids and geometric shapes that reappear throughout the exhibition resemble the Minimalist paintings of Agnes Martin or the conceptual installations of Sol LeWitt. The piano drawings fit into a trajectory of artists throughout the twentieth century who created abstract and Minimalist art and relied heavily on music, admiring it as a “pure” form of abstraction. The music written onto Ms. Lawrence’s drawings could be that of John Cage or Miles Davis, with sparse and irregular notes intermingling with sounds of the environment.

The work in *audio visual* occupies a space of tension. It hangs playfully on the wall attached with thin, fragile pins, floating between the wall and the viewer. Its inspiration is structure and regularity, but its form is fluid and uncertain. It balances between chaos and rationality. It rests comfortably on the precipice between audio and visual.

—Heather Murray



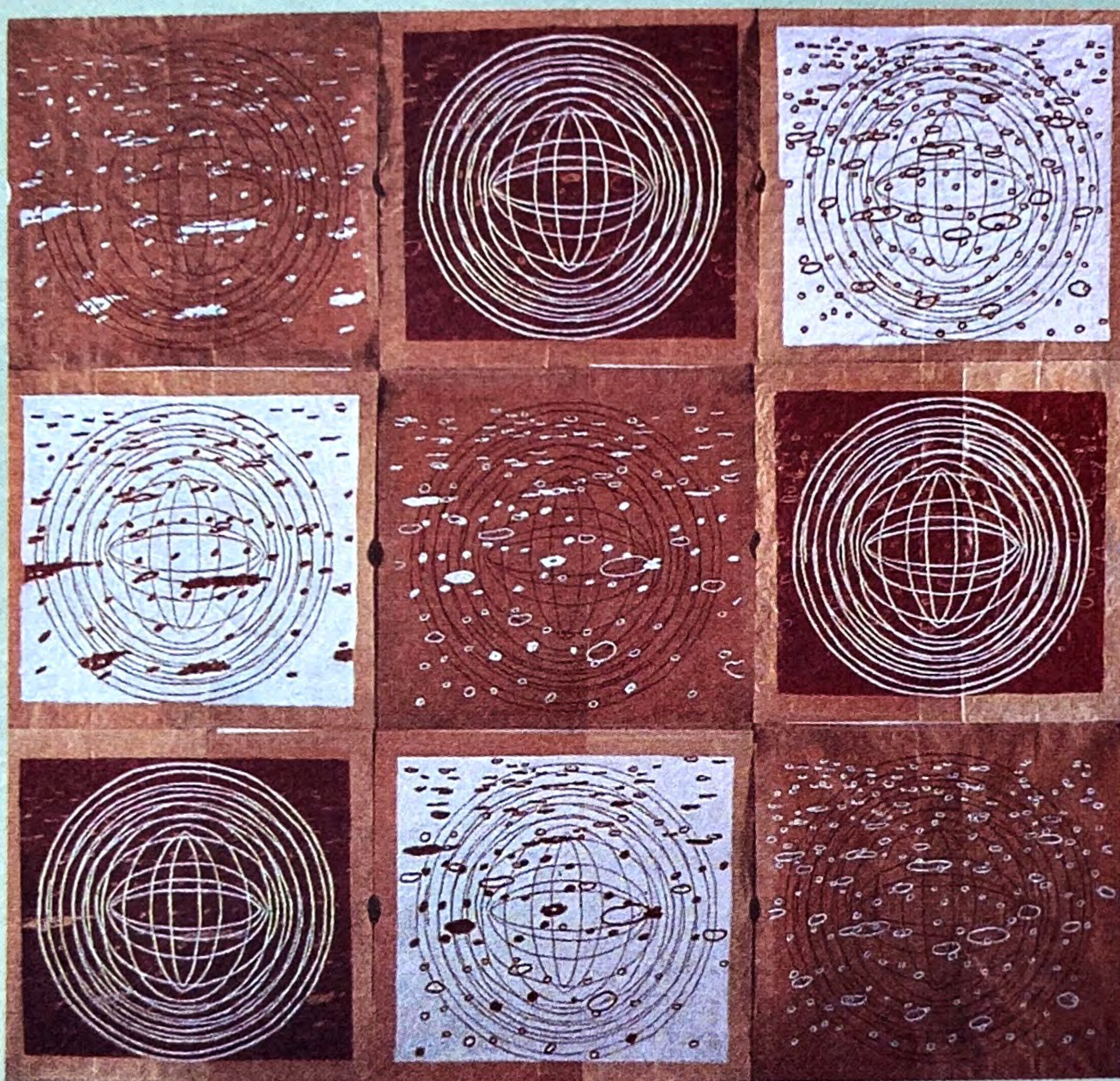
left to right: *Candle Drawing Series*, 5/27/1999, 5/27/1999, 2/13/1999

biography

Annette Lawrence, born in 1965 in Rockville Center, New York, is an artist who works in a broad range of media including drawing, painting, sculpture, installation and performance. Selected solo exhibitions include "Annette Lawrence" at the Arthur Roger Gallery in New Orleans (2001); "Transparent/Opaque" at the University of Michigan Museum of Art in Ann Arbor (2000); "First Dance" at the Dallas Visual Arts Center (1999); "Annette Lawrence" at the African American Museum in Dallas (1998); and "Recent Works" at the Bag Factory in Johannesburg, South Africa (1998). She has participated in group shows at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin (2002); the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston (1997); and the Whitney Biennial Exhibition in New York (1997). Her work is held in the collections of the Jack S. Blanton Museum, the Dallas Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and the American Airlines Corporation. Ms. Lawrence earned her MFA in 1990 from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and a BFA from the University of Hartford, Connecticut. Since 1996 she is a Professor of Drawing and Painting at the University of North Texas in Denton, where she works and lives.

acknowledgements

Sincere thanks are extended to Annette Lawrence for her patience and generosity as artist, teacher, and friend. The staff of the Sweeney Art Gallery, and especially Heather Murray, who began to organize this show as a UCR graduate student and finished the project as a guest curator, deserve special mention. This exhibition was made possible with funding from the UCR Graduate Student Association, the UCR Center for Ideas and Society, and the Sweeney Art Gallery membership. Additional support was provided by the Dunn and Brown Contemporary Gallery in Dallas, Texas and by the University of North Texas in Denton. Several UCR faculty members also lent their energy and enthusiasm to the groundwork of the show: Amelia Jones and Patricia Morton, both in the Department of the History of Art, and Edgar Arceneaux in the Studio Art Department. Finally, Ms. Lawrence wishes to express her gratitude to Gail and A.C. Lawrence, her parents.



Red Ellipse, 2002

checklist of the exhibition

- Red Ellipse, 2002, acrylic & graphite on paper, 2¹/₂' X 2¹/₂' ea. (9 sections)*
- Isolated Notes, 2001, ink on paper, 8¹/₂" X 11" ea. (9 sections)*
- Isolated Lines, 2001, ink on paper, 8¹/₂" X 11" ea. (9 sections)*
- Isolated Letters, 2001, ink on paper, 8¹/₂" X 11" ea. (9 sections)*
- Untitled Black #1, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 17" X 26"*
- Untitled Black #2, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 17" X 26"*
- Untitled Black #3, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 17" X 26"*
- Music Lessons, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 16" X 20" ea. (21 sections)*
- Perspective Music Lessons, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 16" X 20" ea. (21 sections)*
- 2X Perspective Music Lessons, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 16" X 20" ea. (21 sections)*
- Black Transfer, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 2' X 3' ea. (3 sections)*
- White Under Black Transfer, 2001, photocopy & acrylic on paper, 2' X 3' ea. (3 sections)*
- Pre Theory #1, 2001, acrylic & graphite on paper, 40¹/₂" X 48"*
- Pre Theory #2, 2001, acrylic & graphite on paper, 38¹/₂" X 48"*
- Duo, 2001, acrylic & graphite on paper, 38" X 28" ea. (2 sections)*
- Solo, 2001, acrylic & graphite on paper, 38" X 27"*
- Candle Drawing Series, 1999, mixed media on paper, dimensions vary (10 sections)*
- 11/97-11/98, 1998, mixed media on paper, 30" X 14"*
- Grid Broken Spiral, 1996, acrylic on paper, 68" X 66"*

■ SWEENEY ART GALLERY ■

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

Sweeney Art Gallery-128
Watkins House
University of California, Riverside
900 University Avenue
Riverside, CA 92521

audio visual:
drawings by Annette Lawrence
September 25 – December 8, 2002

Friday, October 18
4 to 6 pm, reception
6 to 7 pm, artist's talk

Off Beat

live jazz at the Gallery
mid-November, date & time tba

hours: Wednesday–Friday 11-4
Saturday & Sunday 12-4
website: sweeney.ucr.edu
phone: 909/787-3755
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front cover: *Untitled Black #2* (detail), 2001