

# Mark Sheinkman

## The Eraser

**NEW YORK** Right after Mark Sheinkman finished installing his first solo show at the Morris Healy gallery in New York last year, a woman walked in off the street and demanded: "Were these drawings made by a person or a machine?"

Sheinkman was delighted. "I thought that was perfect. She appreciated the ambiguity, even though her approach was a little naive."

The abstract drawings have evoked a broad host of associations, most notably with scientific photographs. Other viewers have seen in Sheinkman's work giant TV screens, undulating waves, two-lane blacktop roads, and—one of Sheinkman's favorites—"an army of snails crossing a drawbridge." They range in size from intimate to monumental—a 30-foot drawing of half-inch-wide vertical stripes greeted visitors to the Morris Healy show. Another of indeterminate length teasingly unfurled from a scroll near the ceiling.

With limited means—graphite, charcoal, erasers, and paper—the 34-year-old artist is squeezing new and varied life out of time-honored mediums, and the conventional tools have proved paradoxically innovative. "I'm not trying to invent something

new, the way people are with installation or video," he says. "I'm trying to show that traditional media—oil painting, graphite drawing—are not yet exhausted. I keep hearing that painting is dead, it's all been done, but I don't think so."



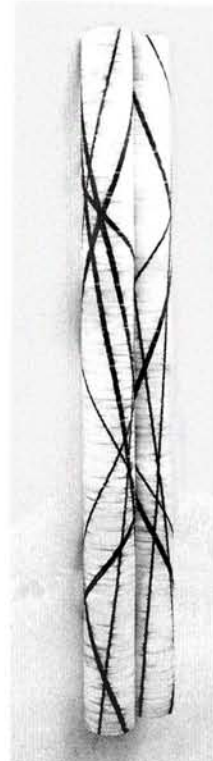
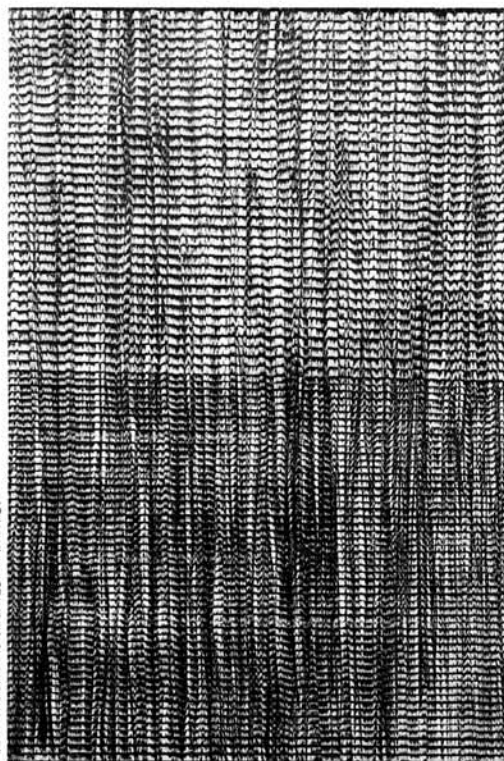
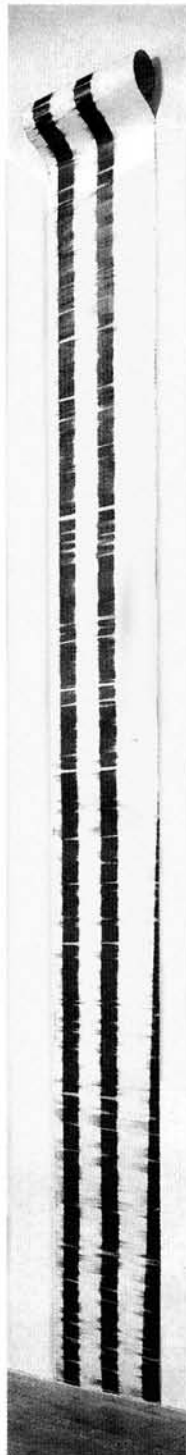
Sheinkman grew up in the New York suburbs and spent a year in the Merchant Marine, where he drew compulsively on board ship and he became much more focused on what he wanted to do. He then went to Princeton University, where he studied with critic Rosalind Krauss.

To support himself after graduation, Sheinkman worked in various galleries and briefly as a maître d' at Tavern on the Green, while he experimented with different techniques in his art. This included drawing with a flashlight on light-sensitive paper; one such work eventually was translated into a billboard in Atlanta. "But I got to a point where I thought, 'Why go through all the mechanics of going into the darkroom, using chemicals and expensive materials, when I could just get a pencil and a piece of paper and do it much more directly?'"

The most recent works owe their photographic clarity and allusiveness to the process of erasure. "When I started erasing, I realized this transformed the work," he explains. "It became paradoxically more real."

The artist has solo shows scheduled at Thomas von Lintel in Munich in December; the S65 Gallery in Aalst, Belgium, in February; and at Morris Healy in March. He may venture into color—but only one at a time. "By reducing my options, I've been able to get more variety," he explains. "The work continually surprises me. Each new painting or drawing leads to another one. I can't keep up with what I'm trying to do."

ANN LANDI



"I'm trying to show that traditional media—oil painting, graphite drawing—are not yet exhausted," says Sheinkman, whose untitled 1996 works here were done in oil on panel (left) and graphite on paper (above and right).

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