

# HYPERALLERGIC

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### AN EXHIBITION AT KRANNERT ART MUSEUM DELVES INTO LOUISE FISHMAN'S WORKS ON PAPER

by University of Illinois



Louise Fishman (1939–2021) examines her 1976 oil and wax work on paper, "My Pigeon," with her spouse Ingrid Nyeboe at Cheim & Read in New York, 2017 (photo by Amy L. Powell)

Citing John Cage's 1965 response to the question, "What is drawing?", *A Question of Emphasis: Louise Fishman Drawing* is the first career-spanning exhibition and publication of works on paper by Louise Fishman (1939–2021). On view through February 2022 at Krannert Art Museum (KAM) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, the show features collage, oil and wax, thread, charcoal, printmaking, watercolor, and tempera in Japanese-bound *leporello* (accordion) books. This range of mediums foregrounds the artist's robust and dedicated practice of works on paper, which were never studies for large canvases. Instead, she used drawing to think through physicality, materials, and intimacy on a register that was often sculptural and tactile, and aligned with her communities.

*A Question of Emphasis* examines the relationship between an artist's biography and drawing through feminist and queer perspectives. Fishman's drawings are distinctive because many are dedicated to lovers — an illustrious network of lesbian writers, scholars, and critics that include Bertha Harris, Esther Newton, Jill Johnston, and Ingrid Nyeboe, Fishman's spouse. Fishman's works on paper also honor her artist teachers: Paul Cézanne, Piet Mondrian, Franz Kline, John Cage, Eva Hesse, and Agnes Martin. Some works are collaborative, including prints Fishman made using her mother's collagraphic plates, and the *Angry Women* acrylic text series made for friends and muses during her involvement with feminist consciousness-raising in the 1970s.

This project follows Fishman's lead, through drawing, to convene a community of living and historical figures that are integral to the construction of self. While centered on the artist's hand, Fishman's works on paper are in fact radically open and give audiences a strong perspective of art as a worldmaking project.