

Artist's Statement

I am interested in the interplay between the drawing mark and the surface. This interplay happens in every kind of drawing whether realist or abstract; I choose to work with it within the still life genre, which is, strangely enough, the realm of art that I find most subtle and exciting, because, as you no doubt already know, still life is not just about the stuff, but also about who collected the stuff and put it there.

I am also interested in the relationship in drawing between illusion and reality. I think that the fact that the drawing mark and the surface are real, while the image created by them is illusory, is intriguing. This is why I draw on things other than paper, things like wooden sticks and bowls and dried leaves. In these cases the surfaces are such active participants in the drawings, they have louder voices than paper usually has, and they do not remain silent.

About the Buttons

There are a variety of drawings, both on paper and on things like peeled wooden sticks that depict layers of shirt buttons. The meaning of the buttons is not always the same.

In the beginning, back in 2002, I chose to draw buttons because I found them to be a present-day version of an ancient design symbol known as the 'circle-dot'. This symbol has been found all over the world, and has been used as a design element in every society and civilization. I found buttons useful as a way to explore that symbol in a contemporary setting. Even after eleven years of drawing buttons, I continue to find their relationship to the circle-dot pertinent and interesting.

Buttons sometimes stand for women's work. They signify the many centuries of unnoticed labor on ordinary, daily, household chores. It is a labor that quietly keeps the world in order, and, as with many repetitive tasks, sometimes lets the mind soar to universal or cosmic heights. As it happens, drawing lots of buttons might be another form of women's work, as it is just as tedious, but also just as rewarding.

Buttons also serve as a form that, whether drawn very realistically or in the simplest and most abbreviated way, speaks to the viewer as a recognizable thing, a small, flat disc that could conceivably be really there. However it is always *drawings* of buttons, and never real ones, that are in the art. And, drawings of buttons are illusions of buttons. I like to contrast this illusion with the actual reality of the surface they are drawn on, or the actual reality of the materials they are drawn with, in a search for that balancing moment when the eye and the mind see both illusion and reality at the same time.

While the above meanings come and go in various drawings, one interpretation is always there in all the drawings: the buttons indicate a human presence. Whether the drawing is on paper or wood or a dried leaf, the hand-drawn buttons indicate the overwhelming

influence of human beings on all of nature, both by being a machine-made ubiquitous thing, and by being hand-drawn by this particular human.

-Margaret Davidson