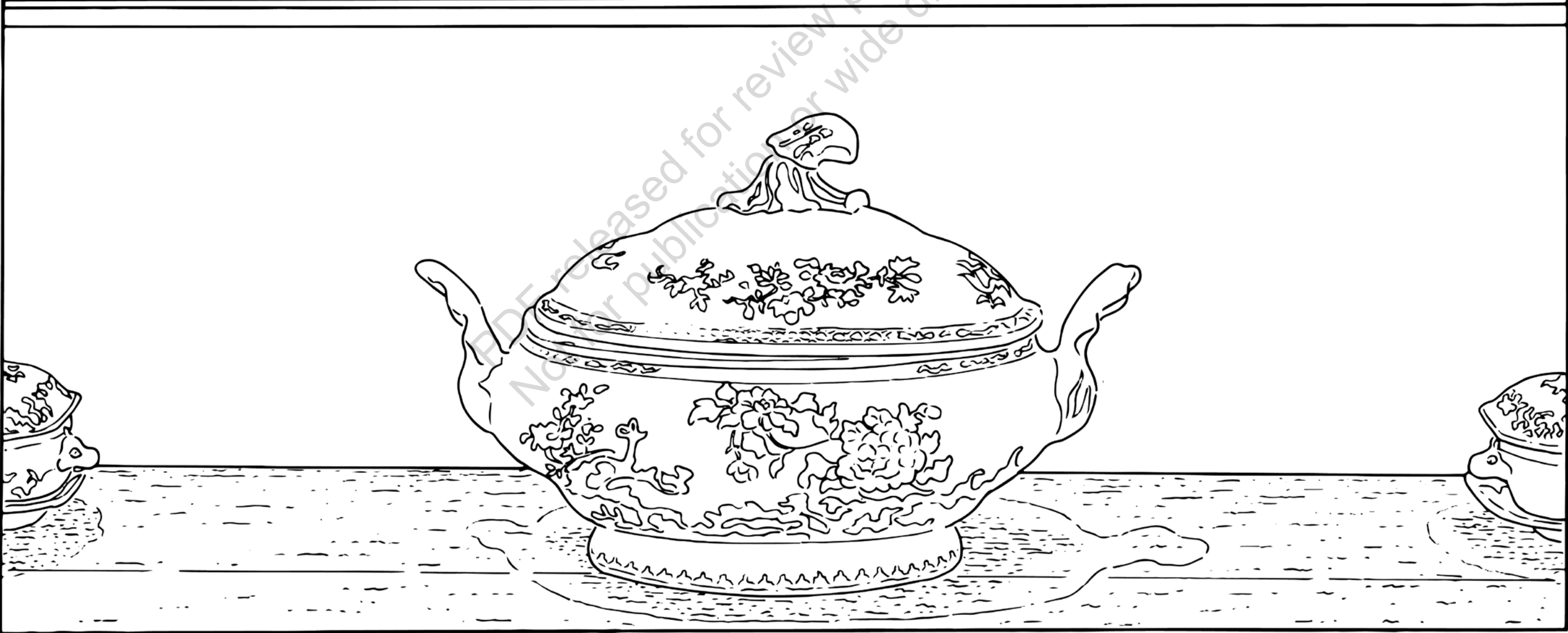
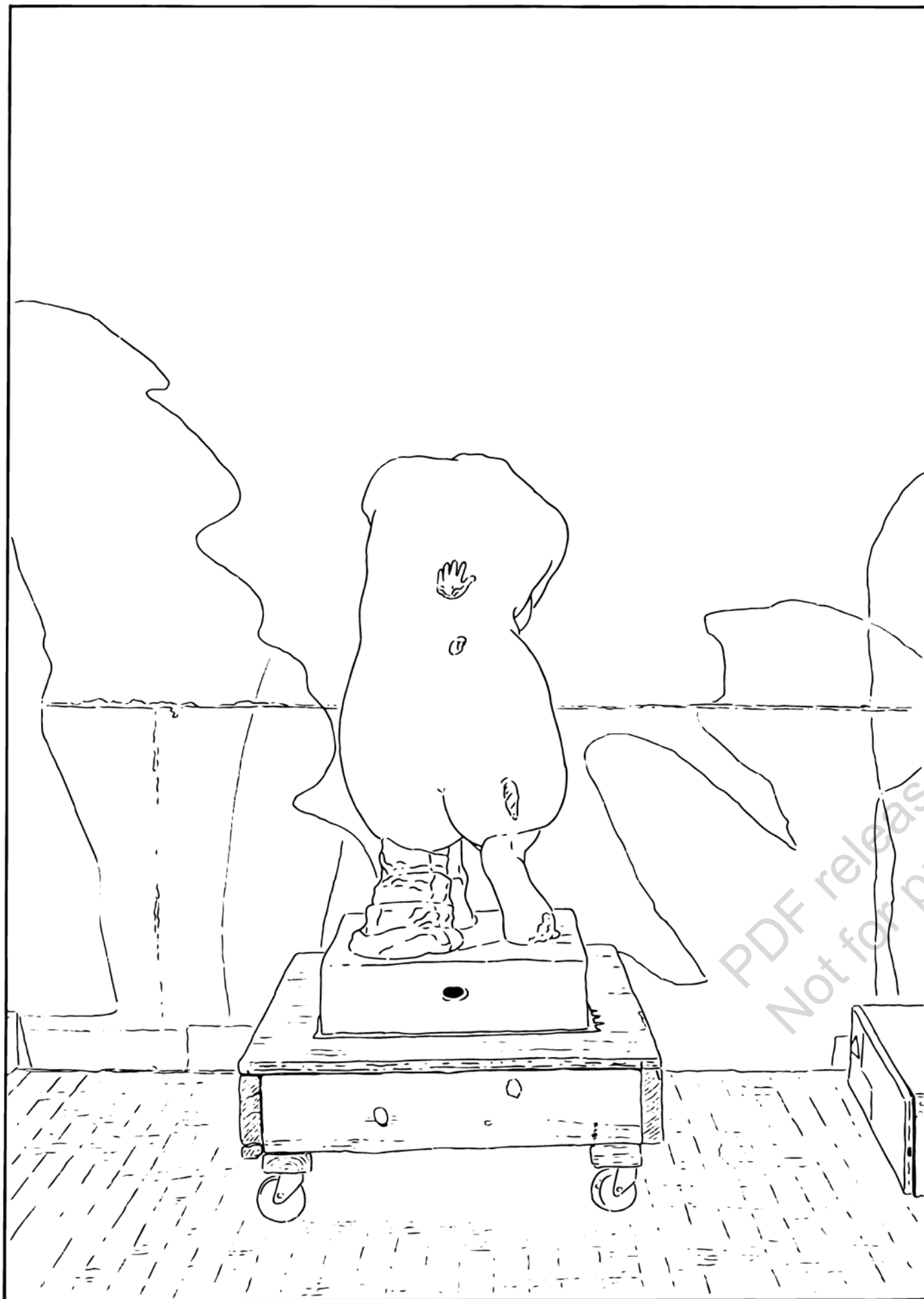


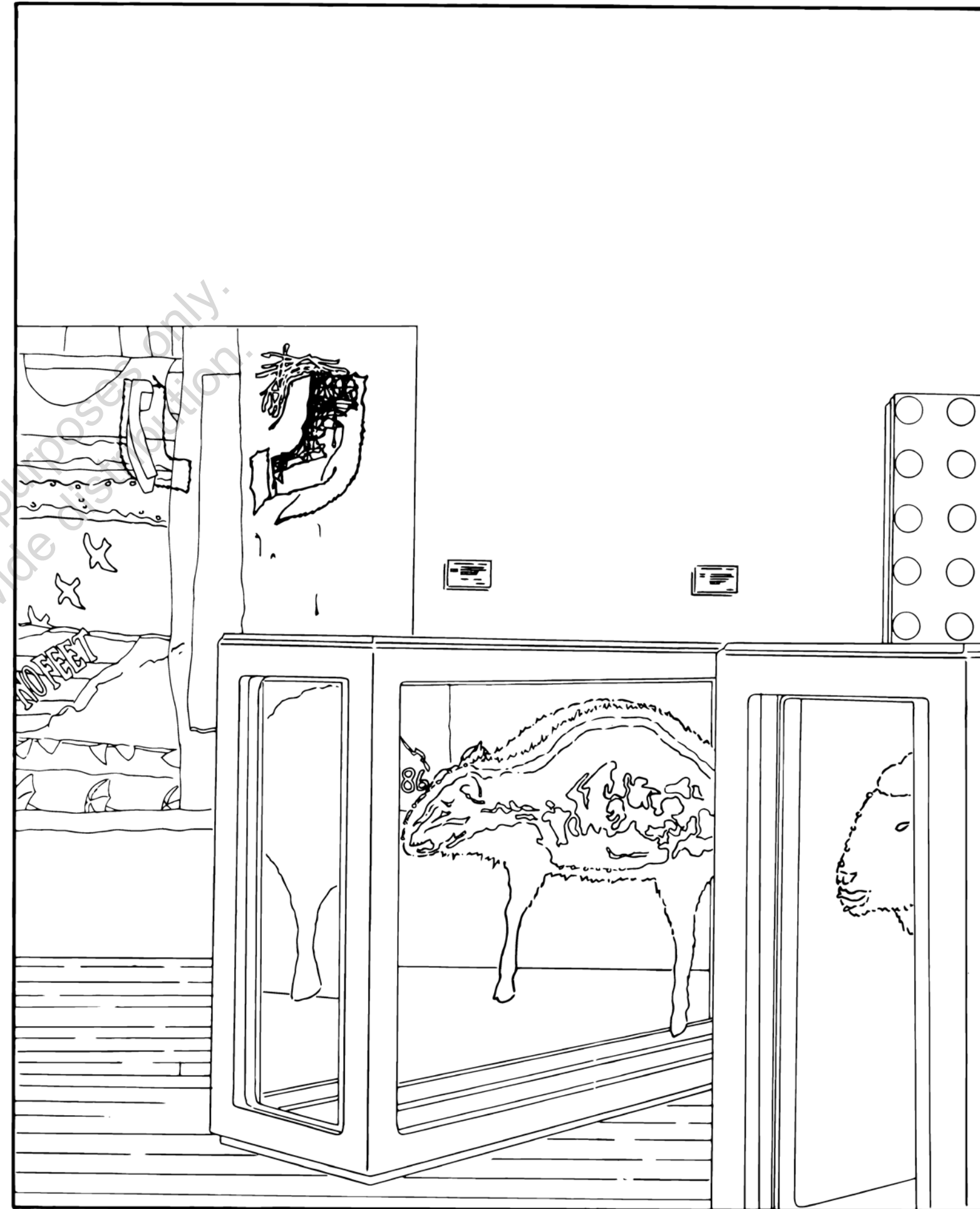
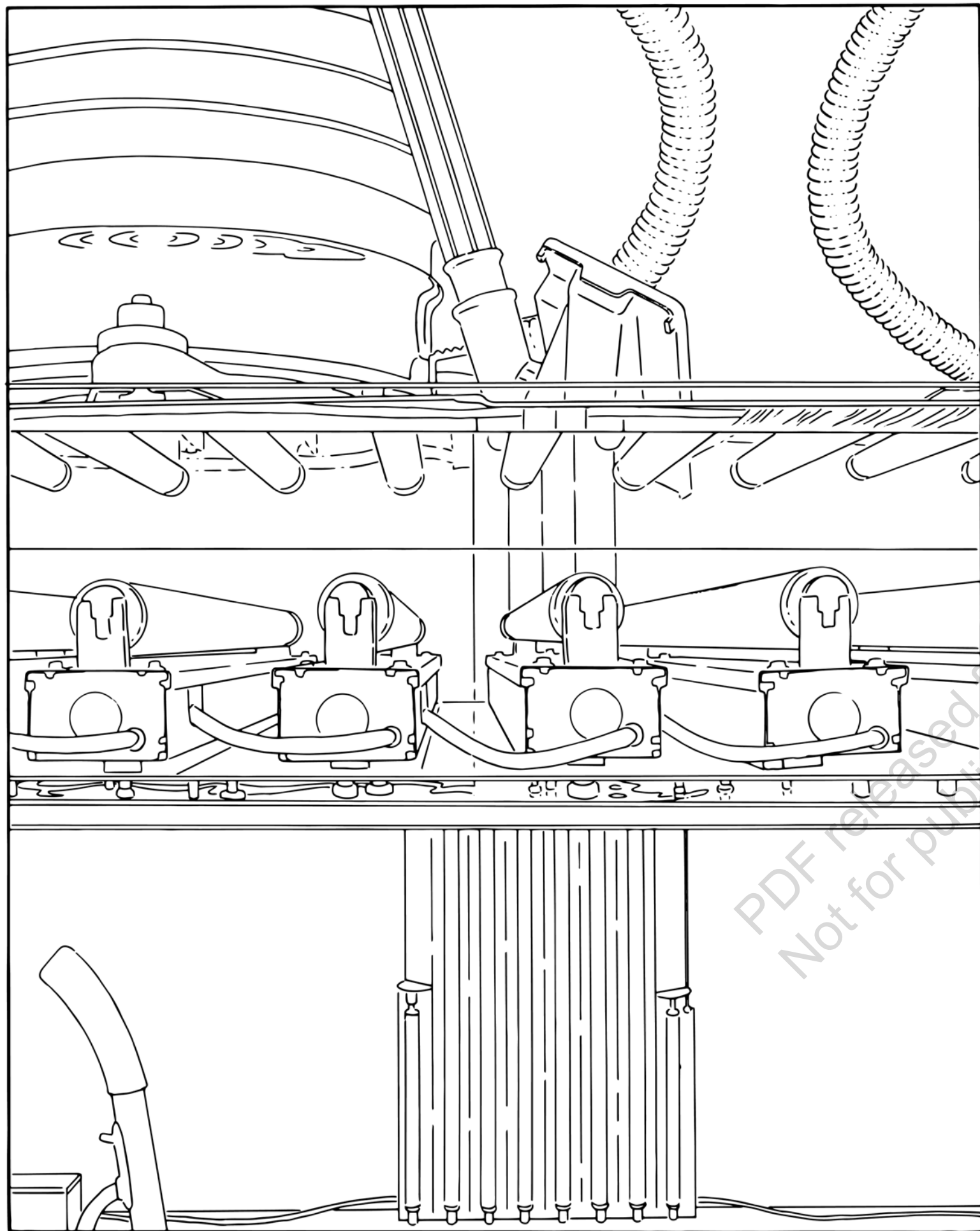
Louise Lawler **Receptions**

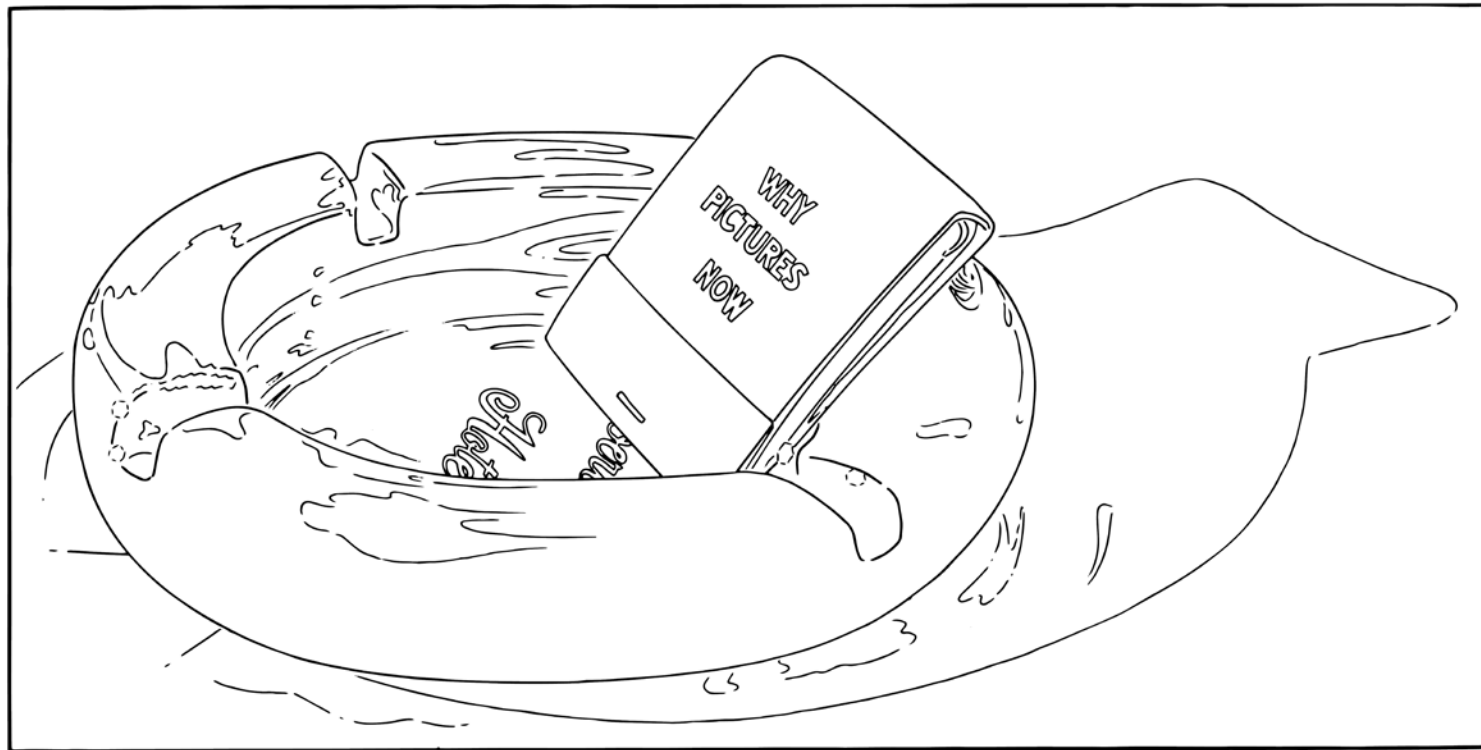
## WHY PICTURES NOW

PDF released for review purposes only.  
Not for publication or wide distribution.









PDF released for review purposes only.  
Not for publication or wide distribution.

## Louise Lawler **Receptions**

ROXANA MARCOCI

The Museum of Modern Art, New York

PDF released for review purposes only.  
Not for publication or wide distribution.

p.2-3: *Pollock and Tureen (traced)*. 1984/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.4: *Hand on Her Back (traced)*. 1997/1998/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.5: *Still Life (Candle) (traced)*. 2003/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.6: *Closer than You Thought (traced)*. 2004/2005/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.7: *Dots and Slices (traced)*. 2006/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.8-9: *Salon Hodler (traced)*. 1992/1993/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.10: *Pollyanna (traced)*. 2007/2008/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.11: *Untitled (traced)*. 2006/2013. Dimensions variable  
p.12: *Why Pictures Now (traced)*. 1981/2013. Dimensions variable

Contents

Foreword <i>Glenn D. Lowry</i>	17
An Exhibition Produces <i>Roxana Marcoci</i>	20
Property and Community in the Recent Work <i>Rhea Anastas</i>	32
Deceptions: “yes, but”, “re-”, “huh?”, “post-”, “oh yes!” <i>Mieke Bal</i>	42
WAR IS TERROR <i>Douglas Crimp</i>	52
Louise Lawler’s Play Technique <i>Rosalyn Deutsche</i>	62
More Jokes about Autonomy and the Private Sphere <i>Diedrich Diederichsen</i>	72
Object Confusion: Louise Lawler’s Printed Matter <i>David Platzker</i>	82
Lawler’s Victory <i>Julian Stallabrass</i>	92
Plates	101
Exhibition History	232
Bibliography	238
Index	248
Acknowledgments	252
Trustees of The Museum of Modern Art	255

Foreword

The Museum of Modern Art is proud to present *Louise Lawler: WHY PICTURES NOW*, the first New York survey of the artist’s creative output. Over the past forty years, Lawler’s work has been extraordinarily porous, generative of new theories of representation, and inextricably linked to questions related to institutional framing and the life of the work within the art system. Through her witty, complex, and analytical pictures, Lawler has questioned the cultural circumstances that support art’s production and reception. Her feminist viewpoint and her exchanges and partnerships with other artists, woven into the fabric of these issues, has invited us to rethink the ways in which we value what we see, opening not only her own work but art history as a whole. Lawler first exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art thirty years ago, in the 1987 exhibition *Enough. Projects: Louise Lawler*, and today we are honored to bring her remarkably prescient and diverse body of works—her photographs, installations, film screenings, objects, tracings, “adjusted to fit” works, and ephemera—back to her hometown.

Roxana Marcoci, Senior Curator, Department of Photography, has engaged in a three-year collaboration with the artist to conceptualize an exhibition and a book befitting their subject. I applaud her and the talented staff who worked with her, especially Kelly Sidley, Curatorial Assistant, to realize this major project. This inspiring publication, the most comprehensive volume of Lawler’s work to date, brings together a group of exceptional essays by Roxana, Rhea Anastas, Mieke Bal, Douglas Crimp, Rosalyn Deutsche, Diedrich Diederichsen, David Platzker, and Julian Stallabrass. Each of these authors has taken a unique approach in writing about Lawler’s contributions to contemporary art, providing insights that enrich our understanding of her profound and challenging legacy.

My gratitude is due to the organizations and individuals who have generously underwritten this presentation, including the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts; The Modern Women’s Fund; and David Dechman and Michel Mercure. In the period leading to this exhibition, the Museum has strengthened its holdings of Lawler’s work, and we are very grateful to those who have supported these acquisitions, including Glenn and Amanda Fuhrman, Nathalie and Jean-Daniel Cohen, Charles Heilbronn, The Modern Women’s Fund, and The Contemporary Arts Council.

This exhibition and publication reflect Lawler’s creativity and its prolific effects in every detail of their design. Above all I thank Louise Lawler for the generosity of her time and thought as she met the countless demands of this ambitious project. We are grateful that she has entrusted MoMA with her work and allowed us to share her artistic vision with a broad audience that we are certain will be responsive to it.

—Glenn D. Lowry  
Director  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York





An Exhibition Produces\*

Roxana Marcoci

“Art is no longer being produced, but only watched,” mused Martin Kippenberger in an extended interview with the artist and musician Jutta Koether over 1990 and 1991. “Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it’s art is dreadful. The whole network is important!”<sup>1</sup> The curator Ann Goldstein has perceptively noted that Kippenberger understood that “neither work nor artist was autonomous” but instead function within an interdiscursive network that includes the role of the spectator.<sup>2</sup> He explicitly admired the practice of several American women artists whose work explored the undoing of the myth of the artist as sui generis prodigy, and in the interview’s first sentence he singled out Louise Lawler as “the most important woman” and an “expert” on this phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

Lawler has sabotaged the idea of artistic expertise and other forms of authorial authority throughout her career. Kippenberger first encountered her work in 1984, when he came to New York to show with Werner Büttner and Albert and Markus Oehlen at Metro Pictures, where Lawler had presented her first solo exhibition two years earlier.<sup>4</sup> That installation, titled *Arrangements of Pictures*, consisted of three types of groupings: works by the gallery’s artists—Jack Goldstein, Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Simmons, and James Welling—which Lawler arranged on the wall as *her* work, or at least as her selection (page 119); her pictures of works by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Sherrie Levine, Jenny Holzer and Peter Nadin, and Allan McCollum, clustered in different arrangements on backgrounds of various colors (pages 102–5); and her pictures of artworks taken in the homes and offices of collectors and in galleries and museums (pp. 112, 113). In short, Lawler made other artists’ works her own and, more significantly, introduced distinctive new models for collective or collaborative authorship. In an essay from 1985, the artist Andrea Fraser observed that Lawler’s one-person exhibition could have easily been mistaken for a group show of the Metro Pictures stable—that not everyone had grasped Lawler’s subtle “reversal of presentational positions.”<sup>5</sup> Lawler had undertaken a similar reversal at Artists Space in New York in 1978: her contribution to a group exhibition constituted a logo for the catalogue—a simple upper-case A in a circle—that Lawler then featured on a poster (fig. 1) she produced on her own, thus shifting attention from aesthetic objects to the relational system that underlies their display, distribution, and reception.<sup>6</sup> The curator Thomas Weski has described her practice as “art-sociological comment turned image.”<sup>7</sup> But Lawler’s work is at once more affecting and nuanced.

Lawler has noted that “art is always a collaboration with what came before you and what comes after you.”<sup>8</sup> In reckoning with

the structures of spectatorship and other modes of address by which art seeks a rapport with its audiences, she has formed her practice around the idea that the meaning of a work is constituted in the process of its reception: “The work can never be determined just by what I do or say. Its comprehension is facilitated by the work of other artists and critics and just by what’s going on at that time.”<sup>9</sup> This is not to say that Lawler concedes authorial agency; rather, she frees art from delimiting logics, making it more permeable and therefore opening its meaning to a wider context of cultural and political forces.

Her work is frequently relational and defiantly feminist. In 1971, when the curator and publisher Willoughby Sharp invited twenty-seven male artists to produce objects or performances on a vacant section of New York City’s Hudson River waterfront for *Pier 18*, Lawler assisted several of the artists.<sup>10</sup> Leaving the pier one evening with her friend Martha Kite, walking home on deserted streets and trying to avoid undesired attention, she and Kite began chanting “Willoughby! Willoughby!,” a kind of birdlike signal to keep assailants away. This tactic led to Lawler’s sound piece *Birdcalls* (1972/1981, fig. 2), in which she sings out the first or last names of famous male artists, from Vito Acconci to Lawrence Weiner, deflating the status of the patronymic, turning a series of them into song. It was produced as a single 45 rpm record in 1972, in a make-your-own-record booth on the top floor of the Empire State Building; its label, which the booth swiftly printed with a flying bluebird, captured the work’s playful wit.<sup>11</sup>

Her dissident melodic voice was timely. Michel Foucault had delivered his “What Is an Author?” lecture in the United States in 1970, in a response to Roland Barthes’s 1967 manifesto “La Mort de l’auteur” (“The Death of the Author”). Foucault tapped the potential of Barthes’s idea that any text or image, rather than emitting a fixed meaning from a single voice, was but a tissue of quotations; meaning, Foucault contended, was restricted by the very construct of modernist authority. “The author,” he wrote, “is the ideological figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning, and by which authorship is placed at the center of a system of individual property.”<sup>12</sup> Linda Nochlin’s groundbreaking essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,” published shortly afterward in *Art News*, questioned the validity of the greatness or genius associated with the male artists who had shaped the Western art historical canon; instead of countering this by elevating the status of women artists, Nochlin identified the coded gender inequities embedded in the production and reception of art, in art academies, systems of patronage, ownership, and museums, and in the clichéd myth of the master.<sup>13</sup>



VITO ACCONCI  
CARL ANDRE  
RICHARD ARTSCHWAGER  
JOHN BALDESSARI  
ROBERT BARRY  
JOSEPH BEUYS  
DANIEL BUREN  
SANDRO CHIA  
FRANCESCO CLEMENTE  
ENZO CUCCHI  
GILBERT and GEORGE  
DAN GRAHAM  
HANS HAACKE  
NEIL JENNEY  
DONALD JUDD  
ANSELM KIEFER  
JOSEPH KOSUTH  
SOL LEWITT  
RICHARD LONG  
GORDON MATTA-CLARK  
MARIO MERZ  
SIGMAR POLKE  
GERHARD RICHTER  
ED RUSCHA  
JULIAN SCHNABEL  
CY TWOMBLY  
ANDY WARHOL  
LAWRENCE WEINER

Pages 18–19: *Arranged by Donald Marron, Susan Brundage, Cheryl Bishop at Paine Webber, Inc., NYC (adjusted to fit).* 1982/2016. Dimensions variable

\*“An exhibition produces” is Louise Lawler’s phrase, and it first appeared in Claude Gintz, ed., *What Is the Same: Louise Lawler; The Same and the Other in the Work of Louise Lawler*. (Saint-Étienne, France: Maison de la Culture de Saint-Étienne, 1987), p. 31. It came up in discussions on possible titles for her 2017 exhibition at MoMA. Lawler, conversation with the author, March 9, 2016. 1. Martin Kippenberger and Jutta Koether, “One Has to Be Able to Take It!,” in *Martin Kippenberger: I Had a Vision* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1991), pp. 18, 21. The conversation between the artists took place between

November 1990 and May 1991. 2. Ann Goldstein, “The Problem Perspective,” in Goldstein, ed., *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), p. 41. 3. Kippenberger and Koether, “One Has to Be Able to Take It!,” pp. 13, 18. 4. Metro Pictures was founded in 1980 by Janelle Reiring, previously of Leo Castelli Gallery, and Helene Winer, the former director of Artists Space. 5. Andrea Fraser, “In and Out of Place,” *Art in America* 73, no. 6 (June 1985): 125. 6. In 1978, at the invitation of Winer, Reiring organized a group exhibition at Artists Space that included Lawler,

Adrian Piper, Cindy Sherman, and Christopher D’Arcangelo. In addition to designing the exhibition’s logo, Lawler exhibited a 1883 painting of a racehorse borrowed from Aqueduct Racetrack in Ozone Park, New York, installed with two stage lights: one directed at the viewer, and the other projected outside, through a window, thus extending the exhibition’s contextual framework out into the street. 7. Thomas Weski, “Art as Analysis: On the Photographic Works of Louise Lawler,” in Dietmar Elger, ed., *Louise Lawler: For Sale* (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Cantz, 1994), p. 60. 8. Lawler, in “Prominence Given, Authority Taken: An Interview with Louise

Lawler by Douglas Crimp,” in Johannes Meinhardt, Crimp, and Lawler, *Louise Lawler: An Arrangement of Pictures* (New York: Assouline, 2000), n.p. 9. Ibid. 10. Willoughby Sharp also enlisted the photographers Harry Shunk and János Kender to document the *Pier 18* projects. 11. Lawler recorded a new version of *Birdcalls* in 1981 at the house of the artist Terry Wilson. Lawler, conversation with the author, July 30, 2015, New York. In 1984 the curator Andrea Miller-Keller nicknamed the work “Patriarchal Roll Call” in a brochure for an exhibition at Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut. *Birdcalls* is

Fig. 1 Poster for \_\_\_\_, *Louise Lawler, Adrian Piper & Cindy Sherman, Artists Space, New York, September 23–October 28, 1978*. Printed paper, 17<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 11<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> in. (43.3 × 28.1 cm) Fig. 2 *Birdcalls*. 1972/1981. Audio recording and text, 7:01 min.; text dimensions variable





Fig. 6 Marquee for *A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture* (1979), Aero Theatre, Santa Monica, California, December 7, 1979  
Fig. 7 Dodger Stadium. 1982. Chromogenic color print, 14% x 18% in. (37.5 x 47.6 cm)

“our experience is governed by pictures in newspapers and magazines, on television and in the cinema.”<sup>20</sup> The penetration of images into mass communication in the late twentieth century was changing the fabric of reality to the point where reality itself widely consisted of images—something we take for granted now, but the sense of rupture at the time was startling. The theorist Vilém Flusser claimed in 1983 that human civilization has witnessed two revolutionary moments: one marked by the invention of linear writing in the second half of the second millennium BCE, and the other by the advent of technical images—photography, film, television, video, digital recording and transmission—in the modern era.<sup>21</sup> Technical images, Flusser argued, inform the experience of looking, and with the transition from a textual to a visual culture, the changes in our perception and interpretation of the world cannot be disassociated from changes in photographic formats and image flux. *Why Pictures Now* suggests that because we see the world photographically, our critique of it can also take the form of a picture. Rather than pretending to mirror reality, as pictures are largely supposed to do, Lawler used the tactics of advertising, turning the title into a direct address to, or a question for, the viewer in order to elicit the viewer’s participation in a critique of the artwork’s promotional value and display.

In Lawler’s collaborative work the spectator is engaged in the production of meaning through social and affective viewing experiences. A case in point is *A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture*, first presented in 1979 at the Aero Theatre in Santa Monica, California. The poster, announcement, and marquee (fig. 6) didn’t specify which movie Lawler had selected, only that it would be shown without its image. The film not screened was *The Misfits*—a 1961 drama written by Arthur Miller and directed by John Huston—whose full-length soundtrack was accompanied by the blank silver screen. As she had done with *Birdcalls*, Lawler harnessed the potential of communicative speech, creating a space where film was sound and sound was part of an altered cinematic event that was critical of the image. This tactic of distanciation divested viewers of the visual pleasure of Hollywood spectacle—as well as, in this case, watching the last screen appearances of Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable—and enlisted them as active coproducers of the experience, one that involved the amplified potential of sound and social setting.

*A Movie Will Be Shown* has roots in the subversive tactics of the Situationist International, the postwar avant-garde movement led by the Marxist theorist and filmmaker Guy Debord. Debord was highly critical of the conformity force-fed to us by modern capitalist society; he denounced the hegemony of eye-catching

20. Crimp, “Pictures,” in *Pictures* (New York: Artists Space, 1977), p. 3. A revised version was published in *October* 8 (Spring 1979): 75–88.  
21. See Vilém Flusser, *Für eine Philosophie der Fotografie* (Göttingen, Germany: European Photography, 1983). English translation as *Toward a Philosophy of Photography*, trans. Anthony Matthews (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).

marketing, mainstream media, and mass-culture commodities. In 1952 he debuted *Hurléments en faveur de Sade* (*Howls for Sade*), a radical imageless antifilm that alternated between white screens for spoken dialogue or text fragments on the soundtrack (culled from law passages, novelettes, modern literature, and newspaper notices) and black screens for quiet, ending in twenty-four minutes of black silence. In *A Movie Will Be Shown* Lawler made a similar break with filmic illusion, inviting viewers to adjust their process of reception. Spectatorship and spectacle come up again in a photograph of Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, of an alienated-seeming crowd of people all facing a Jumbotron (fig.7). The image was published in “The Spectacle” issue of *Wedge* magazine (1982, fig. 8) to illustrate an excerpt from *La Société du spectacle* (*The Society of the Spectacle*), Debord’s leftist treatise of 1967, in which he defines spectacle as “a social relation among people, mediated by images.”<sup>22</sup> Lawler reprised the antispectacular *A Movie Will Be Shown* on several occasions.<sup>23</sup> In 1983, at Bleecker Street Cinema in New York, she “showed” *The Hustler*, of 1961, and *What’s Opera Doc?*, a 1957 Bugs Bunny cartoon, and produced for the event a new poster (fig. 9), in which visual and textual citations from films by Alfred Hitchcock and Jean-Luc Godard collided within a single frame.<sup>24</sup> In subsequent iterations she continued to reroute cinematic conventions, rejecting the traditional one-way relationship of viewer to screen and creating participatory roles for spectators.

Lawler’s repertoire of motifs is built on montage, performativity, and self-appropriation: in producing one body of work, she often generates several. The process of continuous re-presentation, of reframing or restaging in the present, is an intriguing aspect of her practice. She often revisits her images, transferring them from one format to another—from photograph to paperweight, tracing, slide projection, and works she calls “adjusted to fit,” that is, stretched or expanded to fit the location of their display. The art historian David Joselit, in *After Art* (2013), has convincingly argued that what previously was defined “as a private creative pursuit leading to significant and profitable discoveries of how images may carry new content has given way to the formatting and reformatting of existing content—to an Epistemology of Search.”<sup>25</sup> Lawler’s strategy of reformatting existing content underpins the intentionally relational character of her art.

Her first tracings (pages 2–12)—large-scale black-and-white line versions of her photographs printed on vinyl and mounted directly to the wall—were made for *Louise Lawler: Adjusted* at Museum Ludwig, Cologne, in 2013, in collaboration with the artist and illustrator Jon Buller. They reveal, in their likeness and unlikeness,

22. Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle* (Paris: Éditions Buchet-Chastel, 1967). Excerpted and translated as “Society of the Spectacle,” in *Wedge*, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 4. The *Wedge* excerpt also included Lawler’s picture *Swan Lake* (Lincoln Center), of 1982, and a ten-page spread, designed by Lawler and Levine, titled *A Picture Is No Substitute for Anything*.  
23. See Sven Lütticken, “A Movie and Other Pictures,” in Tanja Baudoin and Lütticken, eds., *Louise Lawler: A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture* (Amsterdam: If I Can’t Dance, I Don’t Want to Be Part of Your Revolution and Idea Books, 2014). *A Movie Will*

*Be Shown Without the Picture* will be screened as part of Lawler’s 2017 exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art.  
24. The 1983 showing of *A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture* was part of an exhibition organized by Robert Barry for the alternative space Franklin Furnace, in New York.  
25. David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 88–89.



Fig. 8 Guy Debord, “Society of the Spectacle,” *Wedge*, no. 2 (Fall 1982). Printed paper, 10 1/8 x 8 1/8 in. (25.6 x 21.7 cm). Photograph on the left by Louise Lawler  
Fig. 9 Poster for *A Movie Will Be Shown Without the Picture* (1979), presented by Lawrence Weiner and Franklin Furnace at the James Agee Room, Bleecker Street Cinema, New York, April 2, 1983. Printed paper, 17% x 21% in. (44.1 x 54.3 cm)









PDF released for review purposes only.  
Not for publication or wide distribution.

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Louise Lawler: WHY PICTURES NOW*, organized by Roxana Marcoci, Senior Curator, with Kelly Sidley, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, April 30–July 30, 2017

Major support for the exhibition is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and by The Modern Women's Fund.

Generous funding is provided by David Dechman and Michel Mercure.

Additional support is provided by the Annual Exhibition Fund.

Produced by the Department of Publications, The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Christopher Hudson, Publisher  
Chul R. Kim, Associate Publisher  
David Frankel, Editorial Director  
Marc Sapir, Production Director

Edited by Emily Hall  
Designed by Joseph Logan and Rachel Hudson  
Production by Marc Sapir  
Color separations by t'ink, Brussels  
Printed and bound by Gorenjski Tisk Storitve, Slovenia

This book is typeset in Helvetica.  
The paper is 150 gsm Creator Silk.

Diedrich Diederichsen's essay was translated from the German by James Gussen.

Published by The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York  
11 West 53 Street  
New York, New York 10019  
[www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)

© 2017 The Museum of Modern Art,  
New York

All works by Louise Lawler © 2017  
Louise Lawler, courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York  
Copyright credits for certain illustrations appear on page 247.

Distributed in the United States and Canada by ARTBOOK | D.A.P.  
155 Sixth Avenue, 2nd floor, New York, New York 10013  
[www.artbook.com](http://www.artbook.com)

Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson Ltd.  
181A High Holborn, London WC1V 7QX  
[www.thamesandhudson.com](http://www.thamesandhudson.com)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016959020  
ISBN: 978-1-63345-023-3  
Printed in Slovenia

Jacket, exterior: *Berlin (traced)*. 2000/2013. Dimensions variable; jacket, interior: *Big (adjusted to fit)*. 2002/2003/2016. Dimensions variable; front and back endpapers: envelope security-tint pattern. 2014. Dimensions variable (see page 201)