

# The Way Dawn Clements Sees

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From the University at Albany Fine Art Collections



Dawn Clements at the Civitella Residency in Italy, image courtesy of Civitella and Pierogi Gallery, New York

Dawn Clements (1958-2018, American) was a contemporary artist and educator known for large scale sprawling compositions and panoramic drawings that involved cutting and pasting paper in a collage style in order to edit her work and achieve a desired scale.



Clements described her work as “a kind of visual diary of what [she] see[s], touch[es], and desire[s]. As I move between the mundane empirical spaces of my apartment and studio, and the glamorous fictions of movies, apparently seamless environments are disturbed through ever-shifting points of view.”



April 2, 1990, gouache on paper, 18 x 24 inches. University at Albany Foundation Collection, Gift of Schenectady Museum and Suits-Bueche Planetarium





*Tulips*, 2014, watercolor on paper, 65 x 53 inches

Clements was Born in Woburn, Massachusetts and completed a Bachelor of Arts at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island in 1986 and a Master of Fine Arts at the University at Albany, New York in 1989.



Clements drew inspiration from her own domestic environment.



*Table (MacDowell)*, 2015, watercolor on paper, 81 x 99 inches

Her large-scale works are densely packed with highly detailed form and texture.



*Table (MacDowell)* (detail), 2015, watercolor on paper, 81 x 99 inches





*Diva (7)*, 1995, ink, gouache, and pencil on paper, 14 ¾ x 11 inches



*Diva (8)*, 1995, ink, gouache, and pencil on paper, 14 ¾ x 11 inches

She also incorporated stills from soap opera and film. Her preferred media were ballpoint pen and sumi ink, though she also frequently worked with watercolor and gouache.





*Oval*, 1995-2000, ballpoint pen and gouache mounted on canvas, 108 x 98 inches. Installation view, Pierogi, 2000

Storylines in soap operas run concurrently and unfold into further developments. Character arcs are often chaotic and cluttered. This is illustrated in *Oval* (2000). Clements includes phrases and people from soap operas in a swirling maelstrom.





*Oval* (detail), 1995-2000, ballpoint pen ink and gouache mounted on canvas, 108 x 98 inches

Clements was also inspired by film. She often began a drawing on a small, singular piece of paper and gradually flowed outward, continuing to add paper as she worked.



*Movie*, 2007, sumi ink on paper, 117 ½ x 405 inches



*"[Movies] get me thinking in terms of scanning spaces and moving through space."* - Clements



*Movie* (2007), sumi ink on paper, 107 ½ x 405 inches



Clements favored film noir and other melodramas. Film noir is French for "black film" or "dark film" and is associated with strong contrasts of light and dark with a visual style grounded in German Expressionist cinematography.



*Jessica Drummond in Bed (My Reputation, 1946)*, 2012, ballpoint pen ink on paper, 60 ½ x 66 ½ inches

The viewer is guided through her depicted scenes by intimate details and shifting viewpoints, reflecting how we actually see as we move through a space.



*Mrs. Jessica Drummond's (My Reputation, 1946), 2010, ballpoint pen ink on paper, approximately 87 ½ x 240 inches*

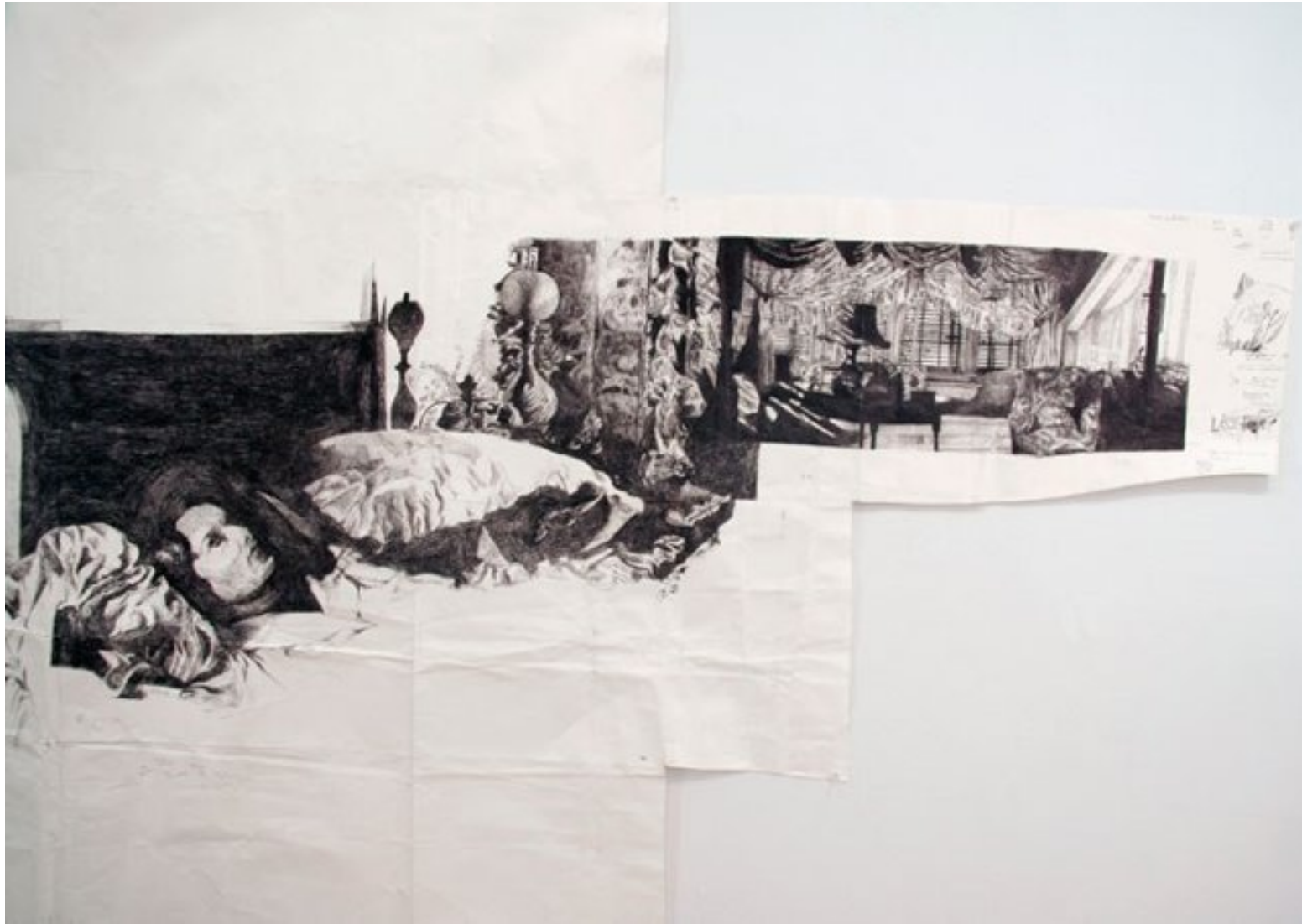


Close viewing is rewarded with meticulously crafted renderings of the environment.



*Mrs. Jessica Drummond's (My Reputation, 1946) (detail), 2010, ballpoint pen ink on paper, approximately 87 1/2 x 240 inches*

Her limited palette of monochromatic ink captures the mood of these melodramas.



*Mrs. Jessica Drummond's (My Reputation, 1946), (detail), 2010, ballpoint pen ink on paper, approximately 87 ½ x 240 inches*

Clements began working in an expanding format while traveling in Europe in 1993. She had taken little pieces of paper to draw on with her. While drawing a telephone in a hotel room she found it would not fit on the page.



*Three Tables in Rome*, 2017, watercolor on paper, 85 x 248 ½ inches





*Three Tables in Rome (detail), 2017, watercolor on paper, 85 x 248 ½ inches*

"I had wanted the cord to fit into the drawing, so I glued another piece of paper onto it. It was a very small piece that fit in the palm of my hand, but it was the first time that I really started to expand. I thought, 'Wow, there really is a reason to work on paper, because I can get as big as I want.'"

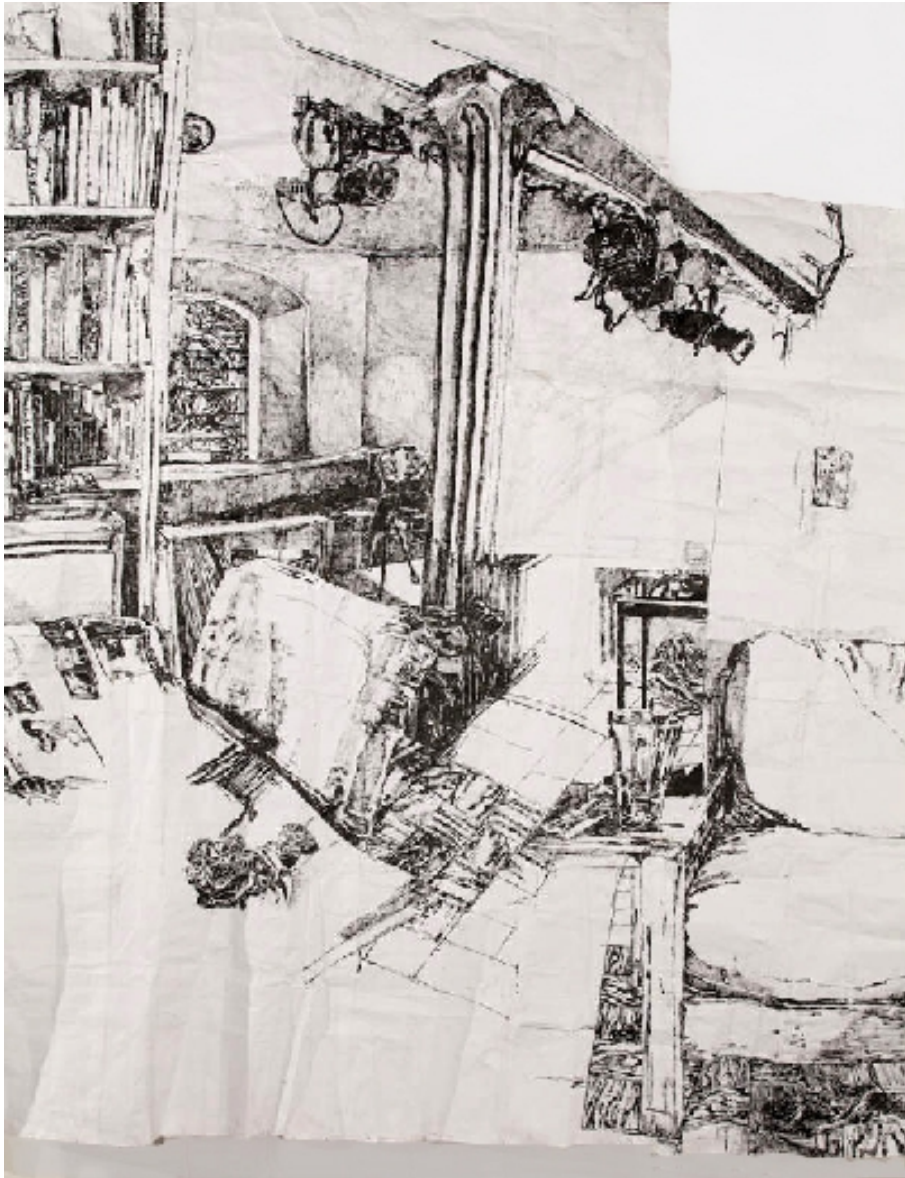
Her technical precision and keen eye for the spaces she inhabits open up into immersive panoramas.



*Susan Rethorst's*, 2011, sumi ink on paper, 230 x 120 inches. Installation view



Then drop the viewer in to reveal a deeper spatial awareness and intricate depictions of everything Clements saw in front of her.



*Susan Rethorst's* (detail), 2011, sumi ink on paper, 230 x 120 inches. Installation view



*Peonies*, 2014, watercolor on paper, 69 x 93 inches

Through her active and additive process, the paper becomes distressed with folds, wrinkles, and seams.





*Dyptich*, 2010, sumi ink on paper, University at Albany Foundation, Purchase of University at Albany Alumni Association Grandma Moses Fund in Memorium to UAlbany Alumni Artist Dawn Clements

Clements's work was exhibited in the *Whitney Biennial 2010* and is included in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art (NYC), Whitney Museum of American Art (NYC), The Tang Museum (Saratoga Springs, NY), The University Art Museum (Albany, NY), The Deutsche Bank Collection, The Saatchi Collection (London), The Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington (Seattle, WA), and Colecção Madeira Corporate Services (Portugal).

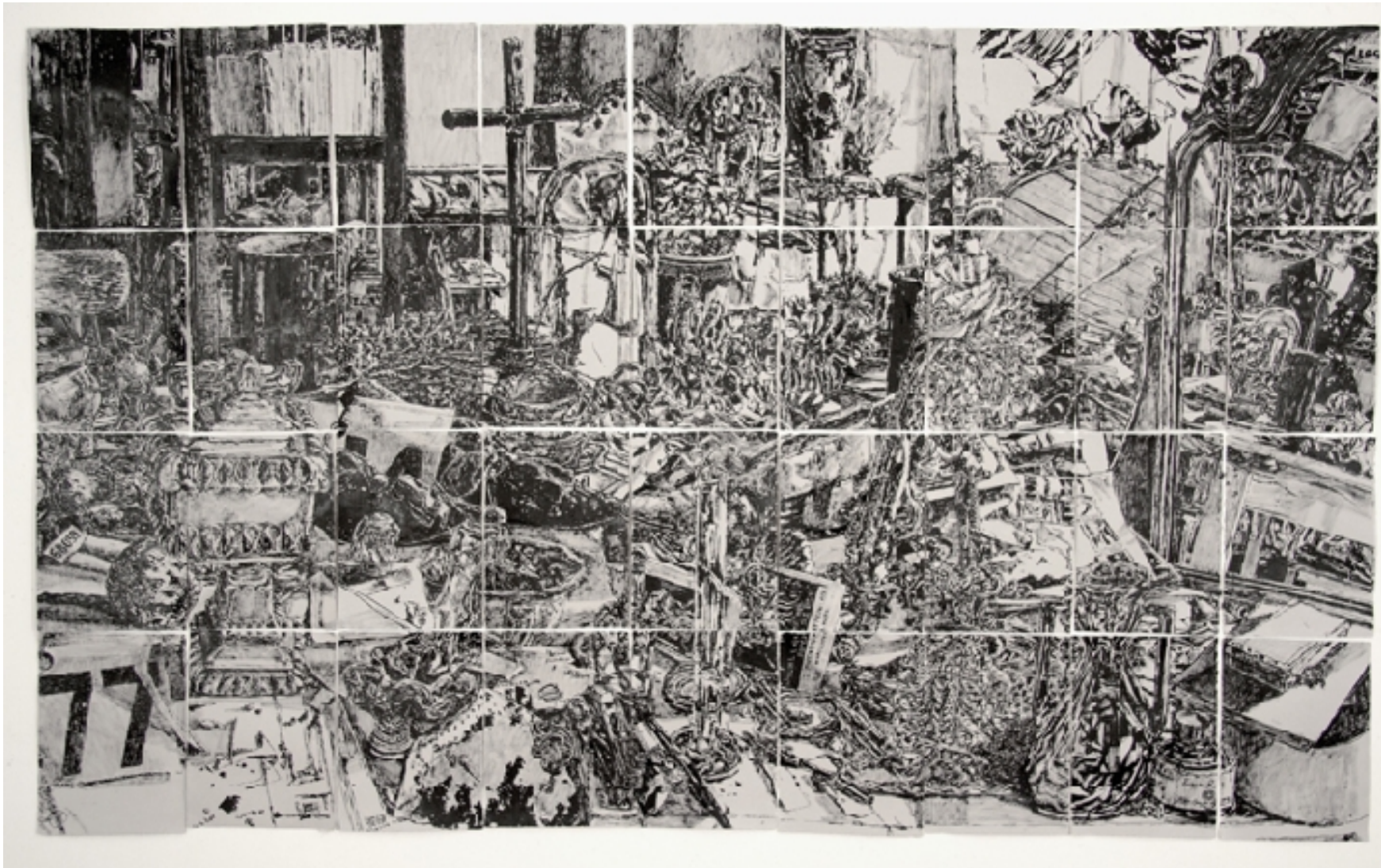


The University at Albany Fine Art Collections houses five of her pieces.



*Flaming Hoops*, 1991, mixed media on paper, 10 ½ x 14 inches. University at Albany, State University of New York Collection Artists of the Mohawk Hudson Region. Purchase of the University at Albany, State University of New York





*Strewn*, 2011, sumi ink on Dieu Donne handmade paper, 59 x 98 inches

Clements has received many accolades and awards for her work including a Guggenheim Fellowship for Fine Arts (2012), Civitella Ranieri Fellowship (2013), Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant Fellowship, MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH (2015) and the National Academy Fellowship at the American Academy, Rome, Italy (2016) among others.

She is remembered for her warmth, integrity, and generous spirit.



Portrait by Phong Bui, pencil on paper, 2007





*Untitled (Squash)*, 2014, watercolor on paper, 22 x 40 inches

*"Clements believes in rendering the form and its skin, not in making a sign for them. Her ardor for rendering the defining qualities of a thing and its surface—whether it is a puckered fruit or a red plastic cup—bespeaks of a deep belief in art's uplifting power. In her work, the artist calls attention to the pleasures of everyday life, from food to film, no matter how deeply one's life is filled with uncertainty and apprehension. Clements reminds us that you don't need much— sheets of paper, ballpoint pen, and watercolor—to make something great, and that the most abiding pleasures may be found right in front of you. I have come to think of these drawings as love letters to the world."* - John Yau, art critic and writer