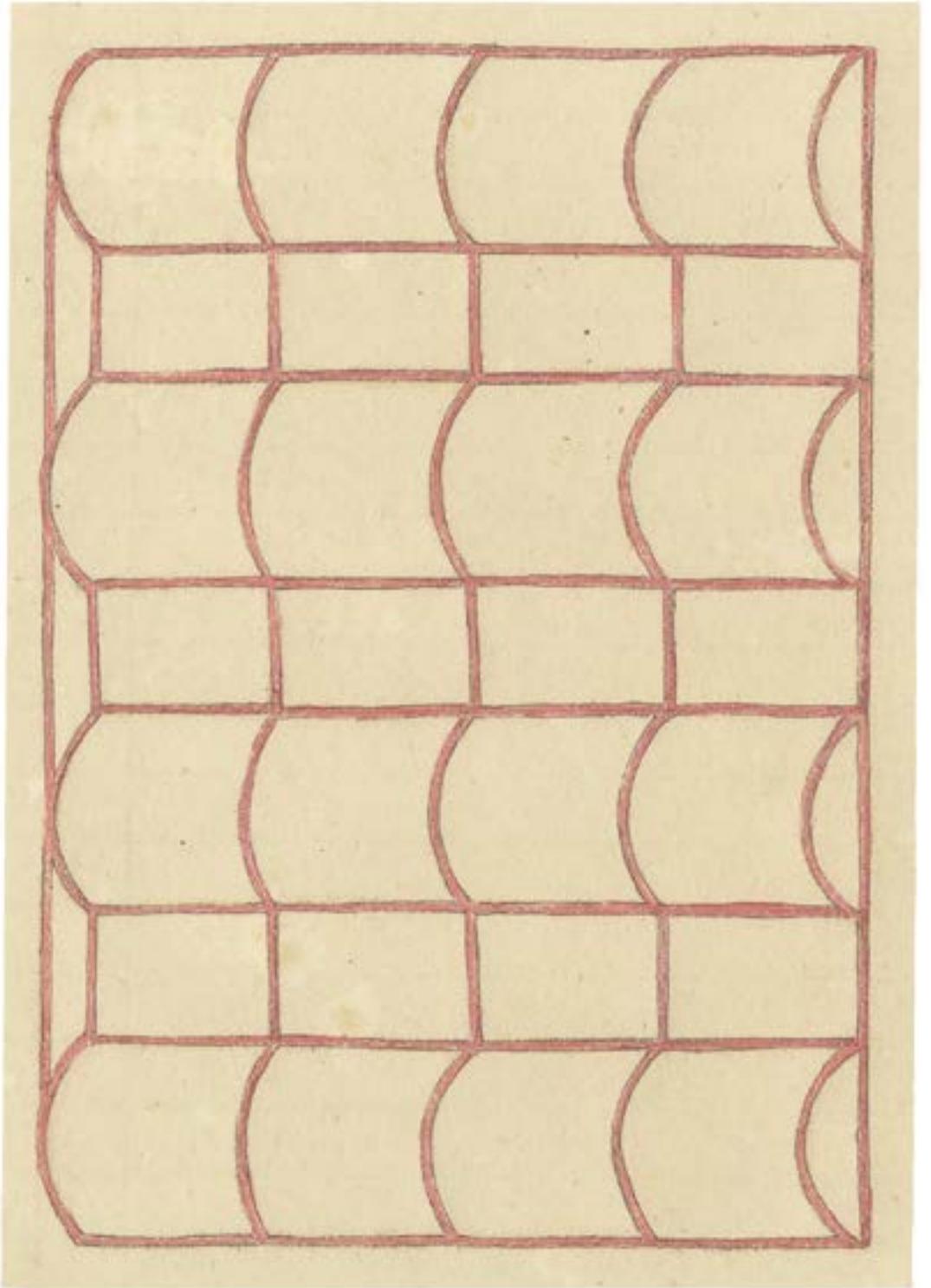


Lynne Woods Turner
Process and Patience

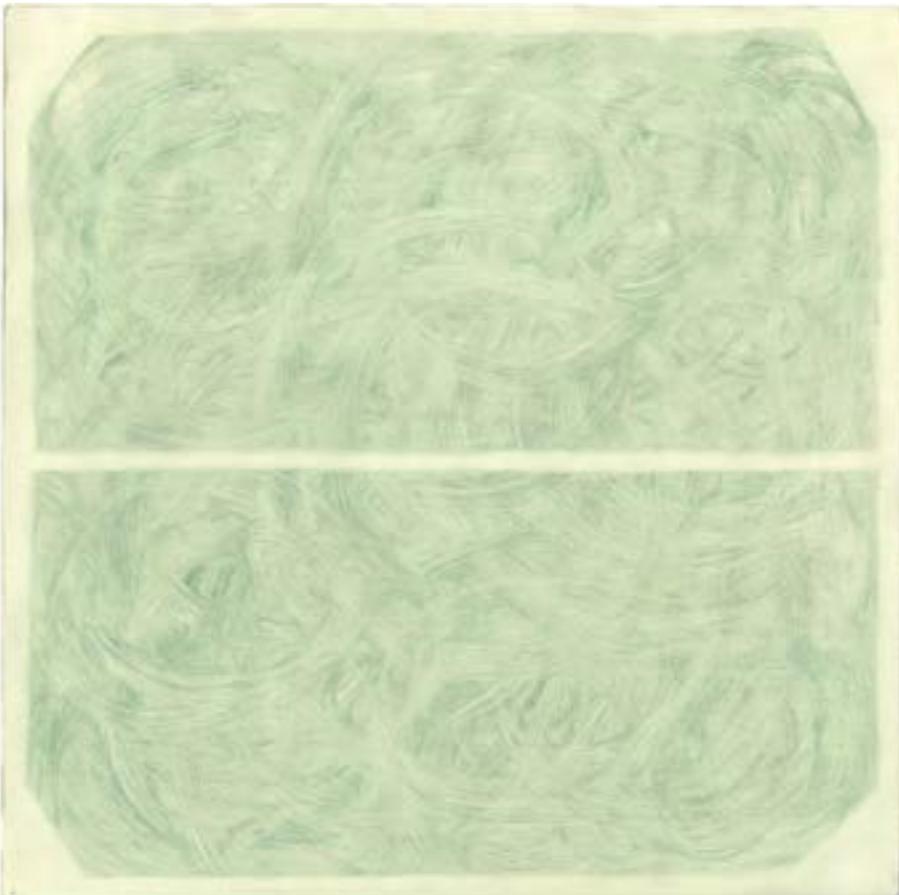
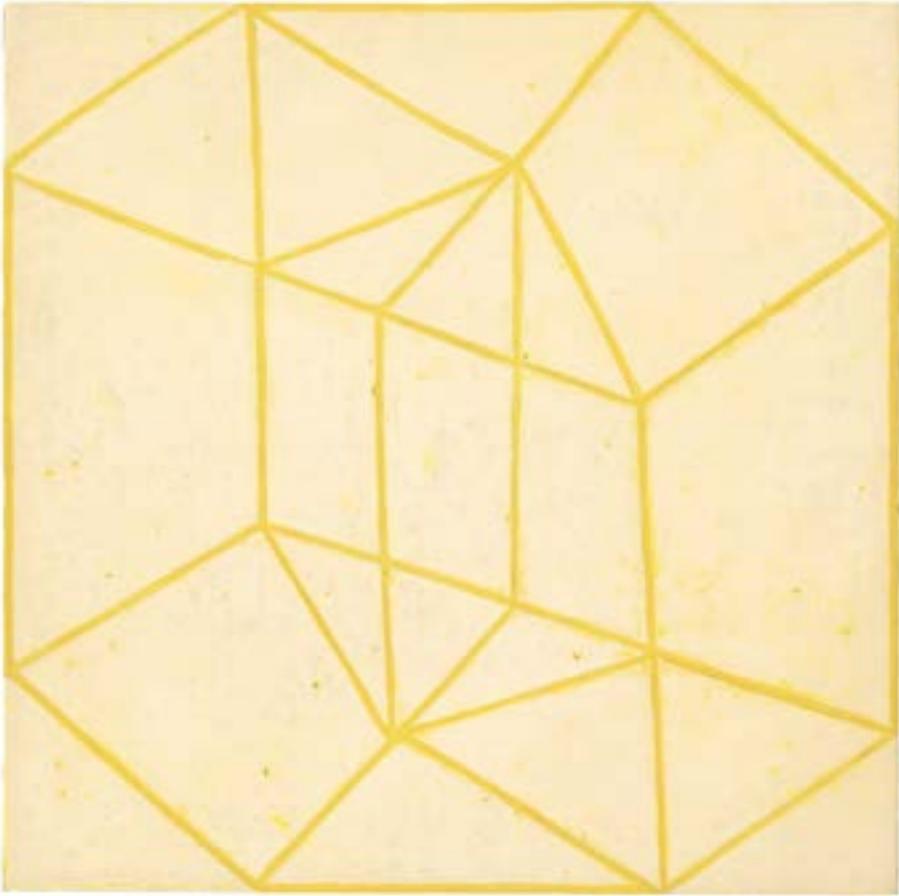
——— *Stephanie Snyder*

Lynne Woods Turner's works on paper and canvas do not ferry images in any traditional sense; rather, they reveal the odyssey of forms engaged in their own *détournement*, like life companions—the best kind. The kind you walk the world with, intimately, often silently, sharing the textures and colors of time as they slip into memory and psychogeography. Importantly, Turner's spatial journeys are a collection of turns, folds, and undulations that awaken the shapes within and around them. These gently rendered yet precise divisions are recognizable to us as patterns that unite meaning and time, as in poems, Renaissance gardens, or baseball diamonds: spaces where the mind lingers in harmony with geometry. Within such intentional delineations, the energy of *the arranged* ignites sensual, idiosyncratic desires. Contraction, expansion, and renewal—these rhythms are as true of the elements as they are of human behavior. As Turner says, “I am far more interested in synthesis than thesis.”¹ We witness synthesis taking place in Turner's work as a coming-together of interdisciplinary tonalities, as opposed to an artistic or intellectual theory. Breath has no theory; and we feel, somehow, the earth speeding us around the sun.

The medial, embraceable scale of Turner's work inflects the context around it; we watch the forms of her drawings shift scale with equal measure whether we're up close or across the room. Moving around the work is met with a sense of dreamy animation. This experience resonates with the geometries of living things such as women's bodies, or the blossoms of flowers—peonies come to mind in particular—whose spatial magnanimity persists whether in Turner's garden or her studio. Like artists before her, Turner's accomplished garden is a constant source of inspiration. In her words, “...my interest in scientific and botanical drawing predates my earliest attempts to actually garden. Both have made me



Lynne Woods Turner, #1225,
2016. Pencil and colored pencil
on paper, 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ ×4 $\frac{5}{8}$ in.



Conditions

more aware of visual subtleties and information, and I find that drawing, like gardening, requires attentiveness, patience, and humility.”² Organic life cycles are geometric events; much of their geometry is latent and still, awaiting eruption, and reproduction.

While never created to fool the eye, neither are Turner’s forms designed in relation to any notion of ideal symmetry. In drawing #1225 (*Untitled*)³, for instance, sustained looking reveals distinctions between the curved edges on each lateral side of the drawing. Along the right, small vertical arcs appear like hidden portals; but on the left, the same barreled edges abut a vertical span of Turner’s ubiquitous, carmine ichor. This difference is the truth of Turner’s experience. In another instance, painting #9299 (*Untitled*)⁴, appears to contain two crystalline forms that tangle in the middle of the canvas. But the spatial anchors of this mating hover above and below, in the horizontal bands of interlocking form at the top and bottom of the painting. It takes time to arrive at these margins. These works are just two examples of the brilliant, quiet force with which Turner’s forms arrest seeing from the instrumental, to the observational and aesthetic.

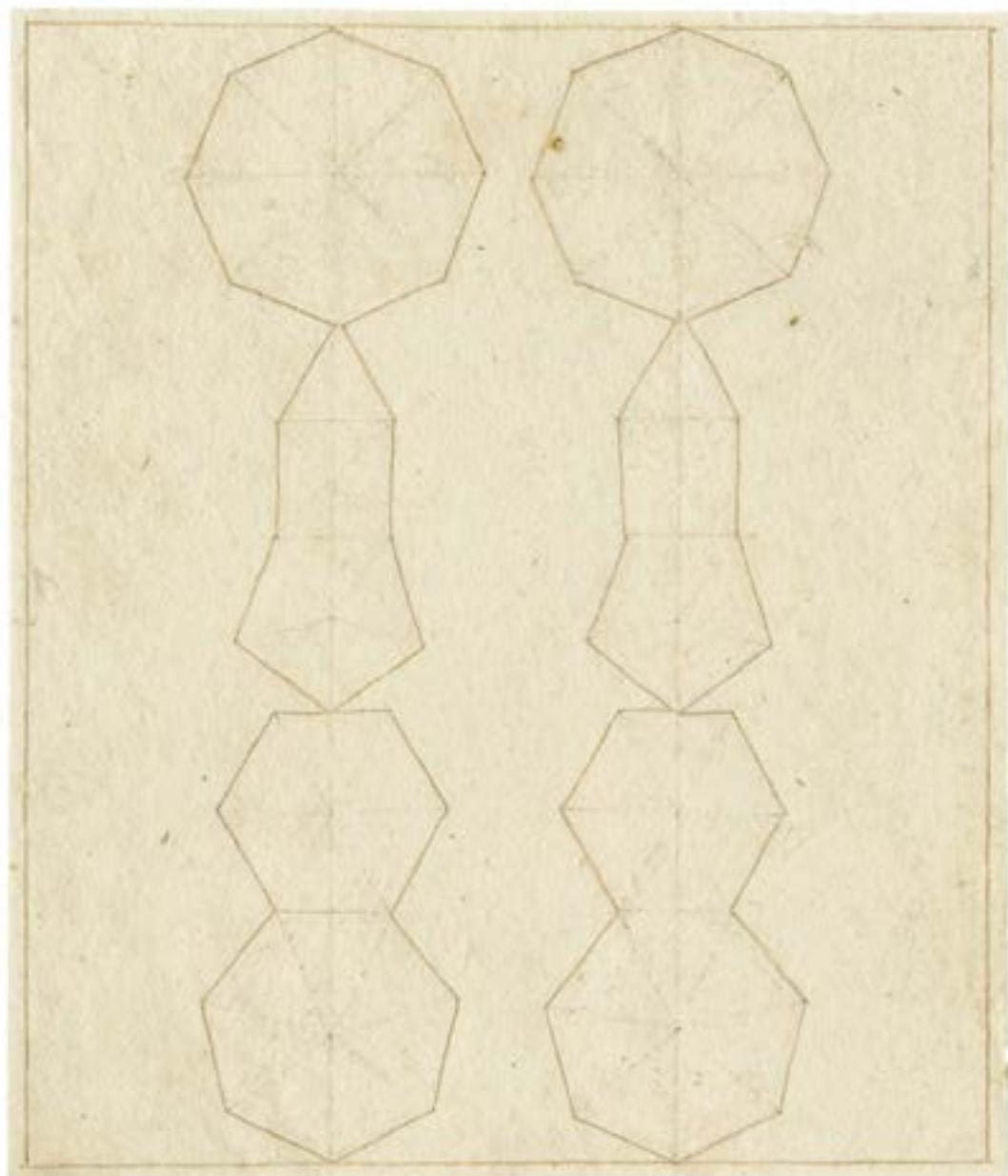
Lines upon lines become something else entirely, something shaped that is palpable to the body. In the artist’s words, “The shape is not exactly a figure, though a torso is suggested; not a landscape, though suggestions of diagrams, maps, and architecture are in play.”⁵ Turner leaves the traces of her process undisturbed within the work. As subtle as eyelashes, or stitches, these ticks and impressions might be considered the work’s subtext, except that it is a mistake to separate Turner’s forms into conceptual layers. We wouldn’t consider the constellations of the artist’s freckles as separate from the organ of her skin, would we?⁶

The same may be said of Turner’s drawing materials. There is a small group of American artists who work to source historical paper; and they collaborate and share their finds with other artists. I’ve heard Turner recount how small caches of paper have been found in a French eighteenth-century chest of drawers or an old Mumbai warehouse. Often, bundles of historical paper are what remain in the cupboards of a home as unwritten correspondence, or the corners of an old print shop as unpublished pages or prints. Some of the papers Turner has used are soft and thick, and some are impressed with the lines of wooden and wire deckles. Some are slightly toned with warm or cool hues. These small artifacts are humble and preindustrial; at the time they were made they were precious, hand-made goods. To develop her drawings in dialogue with these storied objects is a communion of past and present—from the now anonymous papermaker’s hands to Turner’s. This energy, this vibration of life past, is felt throughout Turner’s work as a palimpsest.

In researching and “placing” Turner’s work, one naturally turns to the great geometric artists of our era: Sol LeWitt, Ellsworth Kelly, Bruce Connor, Agnes Martin, and, perhaps surprisingly, Louise Bourgeois. In many of Bourgeois’ drawing series created on small, like pieces of paper, the artist, like Turner, evolved simple forms—such as the arcing legs of her maternal spiders—into exploratory, shifting patterns. These drawings by Bourgeois resonate with the emotional richness and feminist physiology in Turner’s work. In contrast, Sol LeWitt drew a fairly hard distinction between “conceptual” art and expressivity. In his 1967 “Paragraphs on

Lynne Woods Turner, #9299,
2016. Oil on linen over panel,
12×12in.

Lynne Woods Turner, #9285,
2017. Oil on carved wood on
paper, 12×12in.



Lynne Woods Turner, #1058,
2013. Pencil and colored pencil
on paper, 4x3¼in.

Conditions

Conceptual Art,” LeWitt wrote, “When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.”⁷ Nothing could be further from Turner’s process, though it’s satisfying to discern meaningful associations between LeWitt’s instruction-based wall drawings and Turner’s evolving interiority. In fact, Turner was part of a team that executed a LeWitt wall drawing at the lumber room in Portland in 2015.⁸ Fortunately, LeWitt couldn’t control the sensitivity and skill of those enacting his plans. Though Turner studies her papers and canvases with something LeWitt may have acknowledged as planning; for Turner, planning is never a goal or mental compass. For Turner, planning and execution are subsumed by experience, and this brings us closer to the work of Agnes Martin, who experienced the drawn line as a form of spiritual practice. In Martin’s words, “An artwork is a representation of our devotion to life.”⁹ Where Turner’s work extends from Martin’s vibrating fields is in its development of slow, shifting geometries that unite, turn, part, and fold into dimensions that elicit the oblique of emotions and intellectual reveries. Certainly, this is also a form of devotion.

1 Artist statement, August, 2020.

2 Ibid.

3 Lynne Woods Turner, #1225 (*Untitled*), 2016, Pencil and colored pencil on paper, 6.625×4.625 in.

4 Lynne Woods Turner, #9299 (*Untitled*), 2018, Oil on linen over panel, 12×12 in.

5 Artist statement, August, 2020.

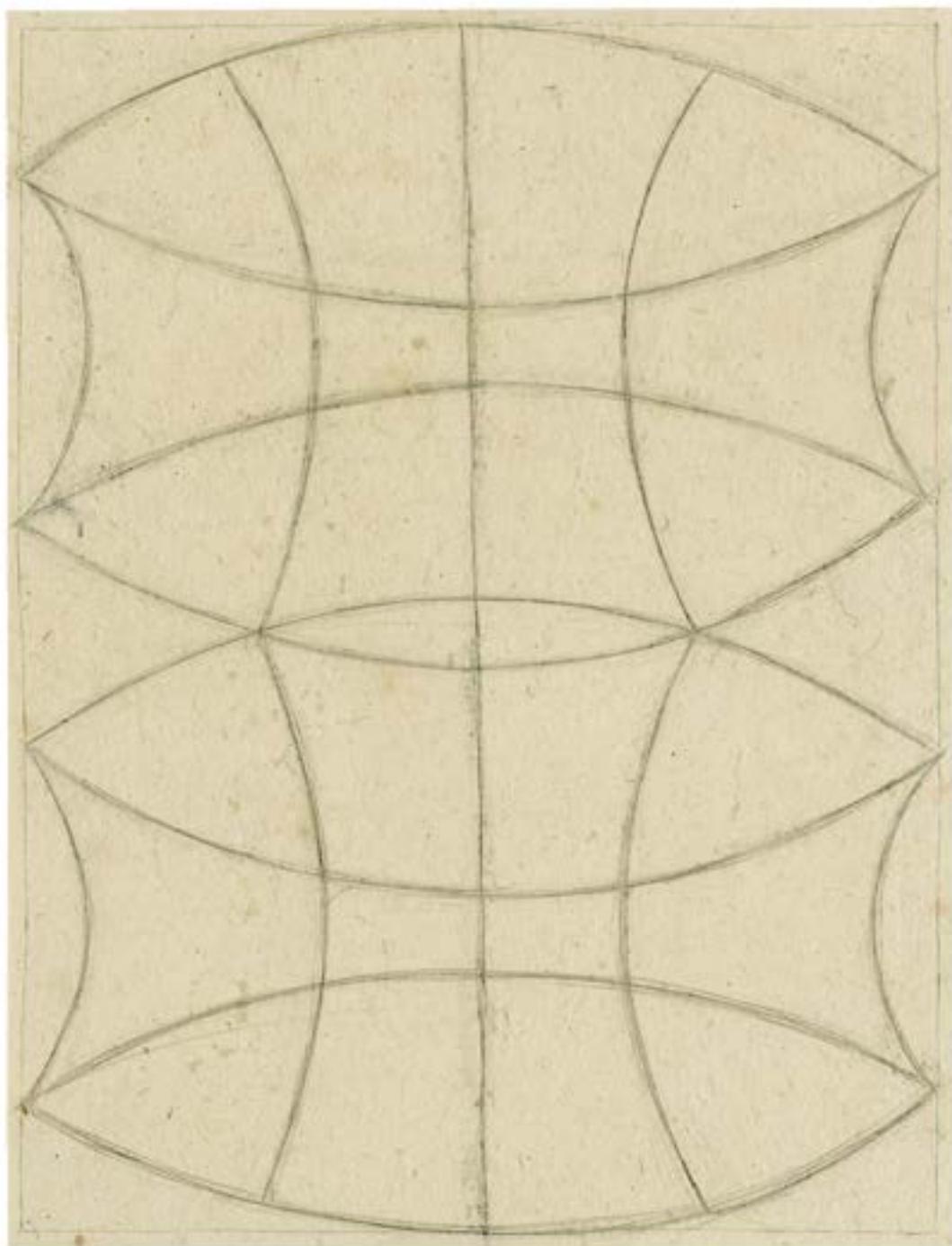
6 These distinctions speak to the pattern-language of textiles, and the relationship between patterned forms and the body. Turner learned to sew well as a child, and traveled through Asia with her parents. In an August 2020 statement, the artist writes: “My travels as a child sparked an interest in non-Western art. I have found sources such as Indian miniatures, Japanese woodblock prints, and Chinese ink painting particularly relevant to my work for their intimacy and attention to detail. For similar personal reasons I am also interested in textiles. As a child I learned to cut patterns, embroider, piece, quilt, knit, and crochet at the same time I was teaching myself to draw.”

7 Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” *Artforum*, 1967. Interestingly, LeWitt published the text before he constructed his first wall drawing at the Paula Cooper Gallery in 1968, in the exhibition “The Xerox Book,” organized by Seth Siegelau.

8 Turner was part of a small group of artists invited by lumber room founder Sarah Miller Meigs to execute Sol LeWitt’s *Wall Drawing #109* in the spring of 2015. The LeWitt was part of the exhibition *With a Clear Mind you can move with the truth*, on view at the lumber room from March 13 to May 2, 2015. The exhibition also included a series of twenty-one untitled drawings by Turner created in 2013, now part of the lumber room’s permanent collection. The exhibition was organized by lumber room founder Sarah Miller Meigs. <http://www.lumberroom.com>

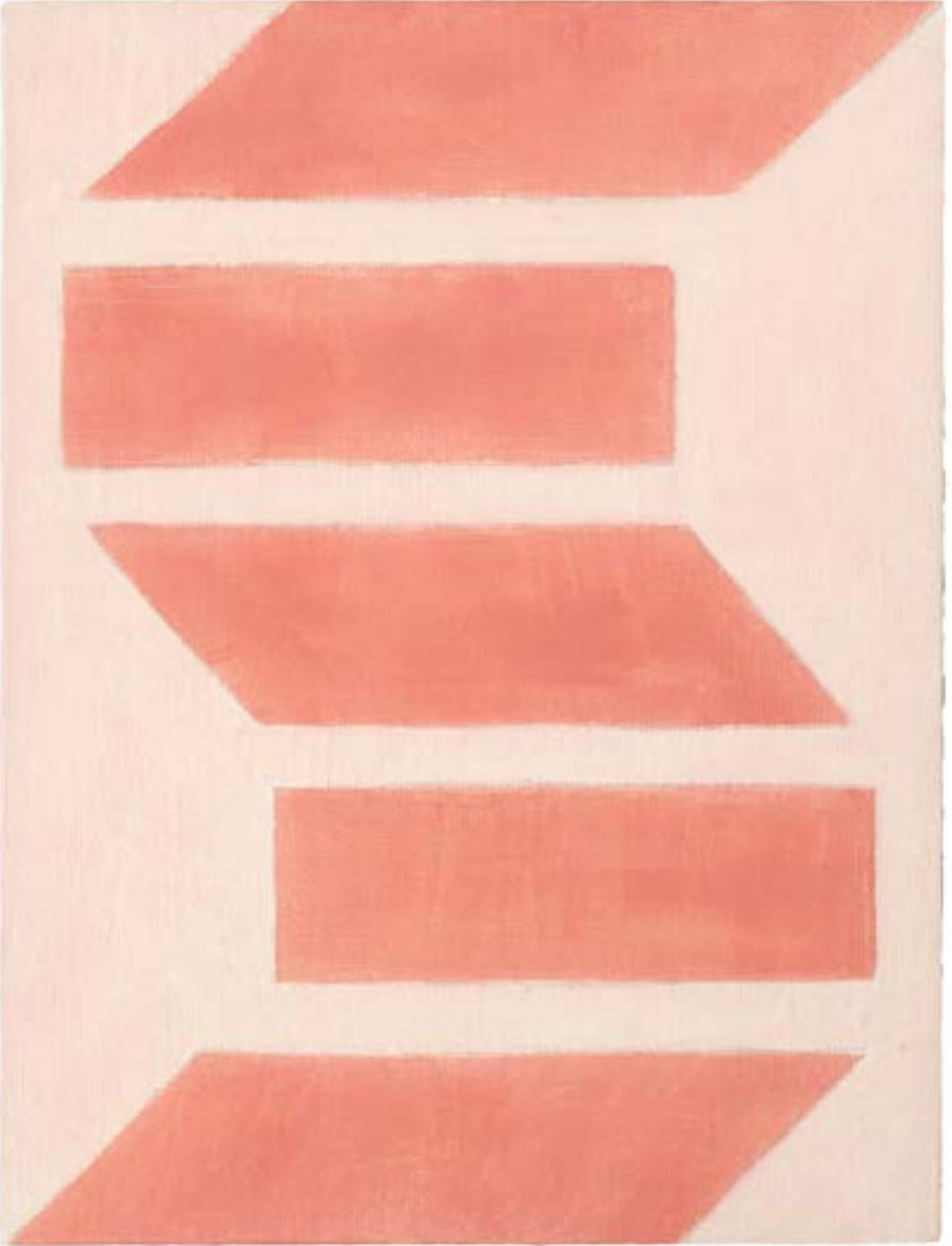
9 Agnes Martin, from a 1976 interview with John Gruen, <https://www.artnews.org>

Stephanie Snyder is the Anne and John Hauberg Director and Curator of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, a position she has held since 2003. Snyder is the curator of over seventy-five Cooley exhibitions including: *Gregg Bordowitz, I Wanna Be Well*, which traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago (2019) and MoMA PS1 (2021); and *No Face, No Case, Portraiture’s Breaking* (2021–22), a collaborative research project around gifts from the Peter Norton Family Collection. Alongside curating, Snyder is an author, poet, and contributor to *Artforum* among other publications.

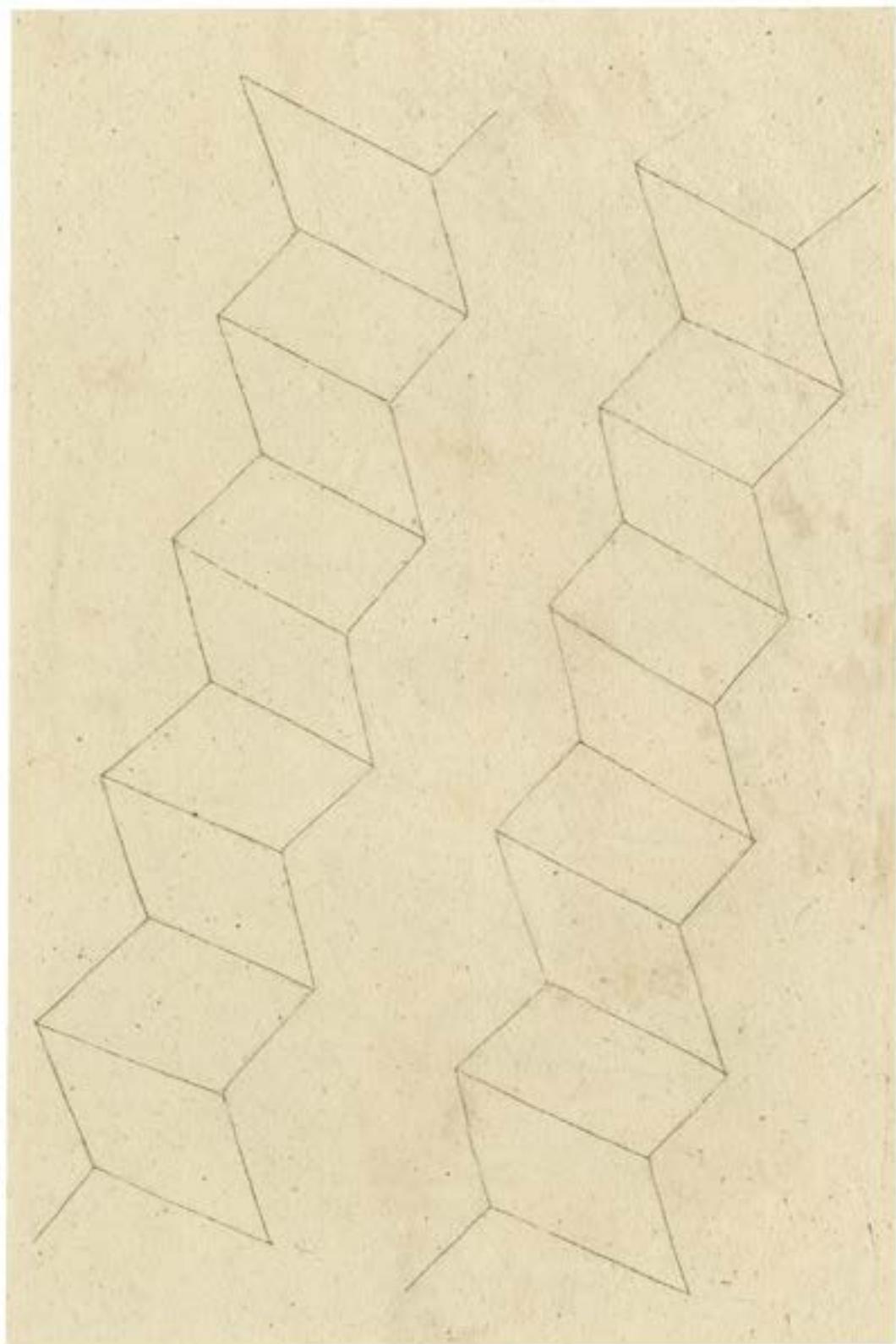


Lynne Woods Turner,
#1122, 2014. Pencil on paper,
5¼×4in.

Conditions



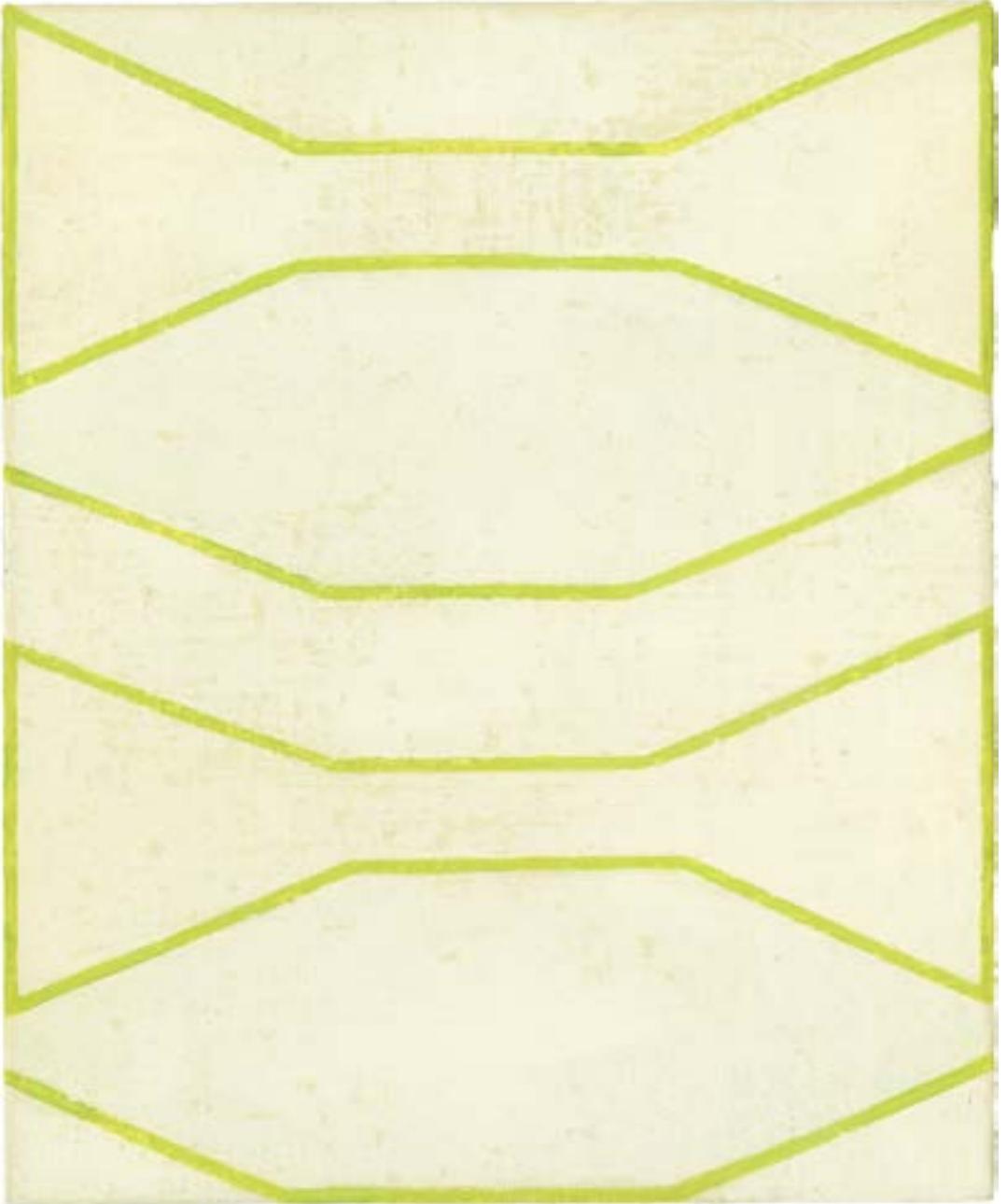
Lynne Woods Turner, #9148,
2015. Oil and pencil on linen
over panel, 12×9 in.



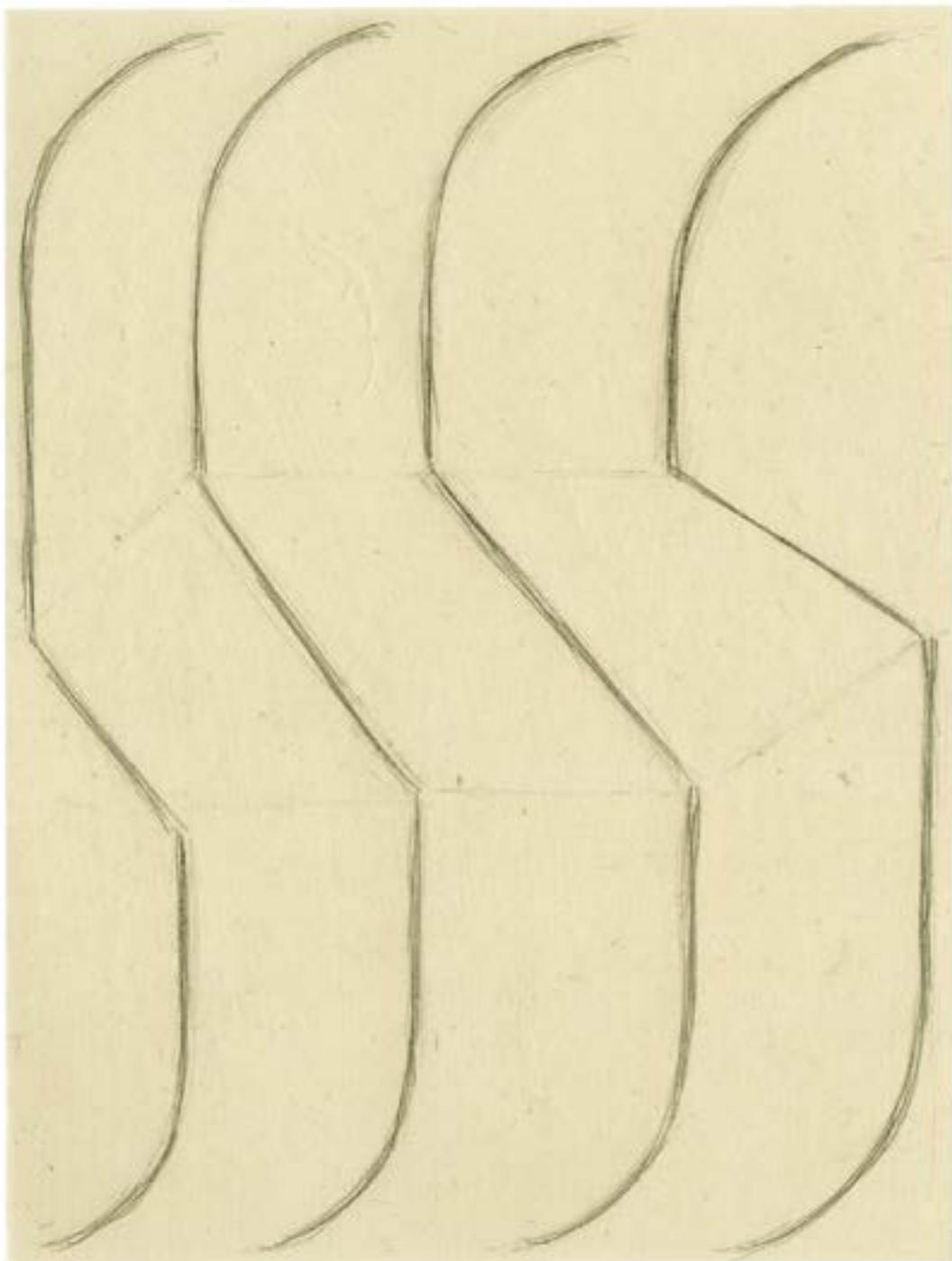
Lynne Woods Turner,
#1149, 2014. Pencil on paper,
9½×6¼in.

Conditions

Stephanie Snyder

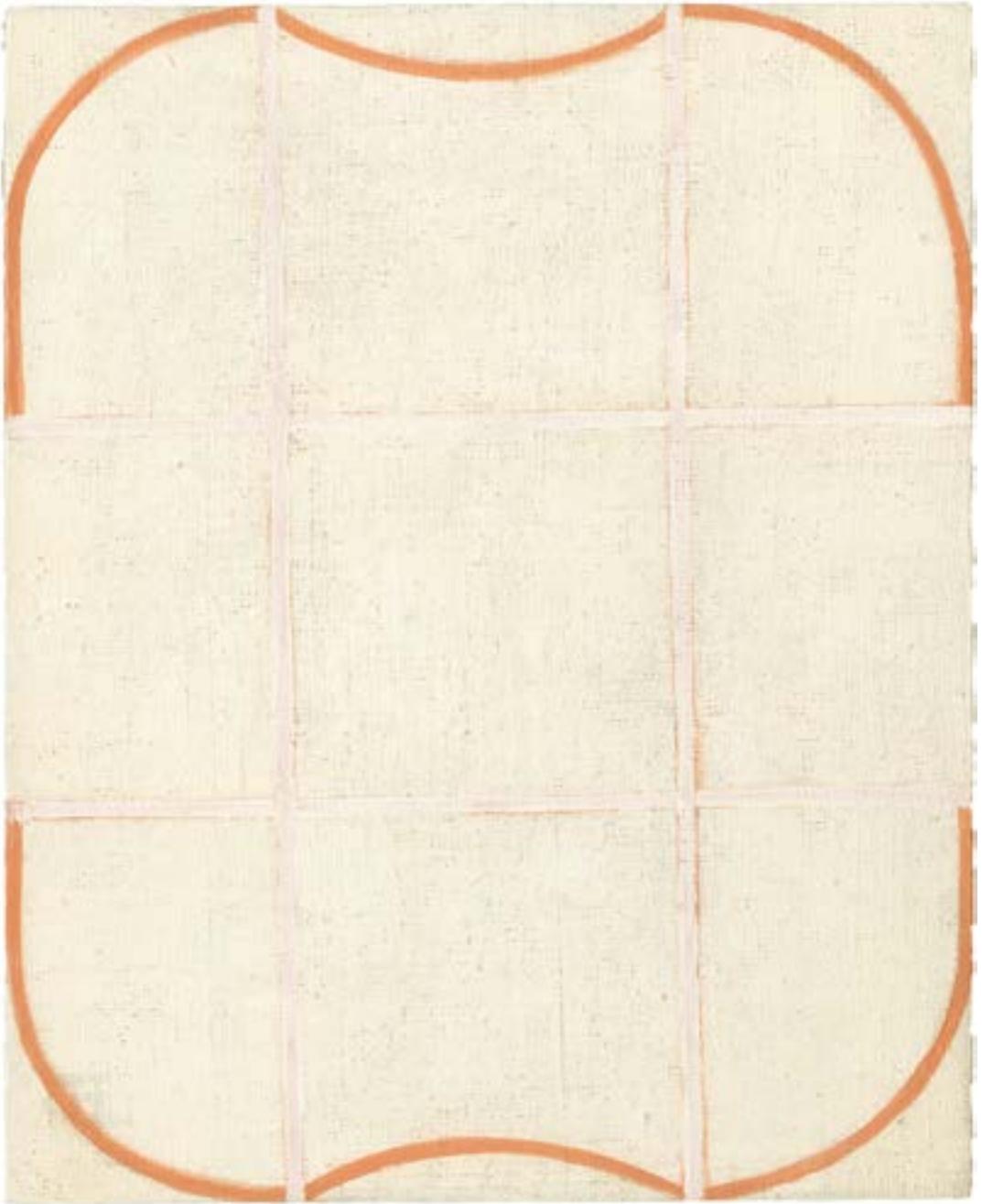


Lynne Woods Turner, #9142,
2014. Oil on linen over panel,
11x9 in.



Lynne Woods Turner,
#1131, 2014. Pencil on paper,
6×4½in.

Conditions



Lynne Woods Turner, #9215,
2016. Oil on linen over panel,
10x8in.