

*On history of two worlds*, Shannon Anderson

*history of two worlds* is a recent, large-scale work on paper that appears at first glance as a delicate line drawing on blank paper. It has, in fact, emerged through a highly laborious, reductive process of erasure. Working from found colour post-war Times of London atlas map pages, Merritt pieced together the multiple folios that comprise the continent of North America into a single surface area. Using a fine Dremel tool, he then painstakingly erased the surface layer of ink from the pages, leaving only fragments of roadways and watersheds. This innovative technique, discovered through experimentation, renders linework that has the convincing appearance of ink or thread that has been added to the surface, creating a poignant moment of discovery in the viewing experience when one discovers that the process is achieved through opposite means.

This delicate array of intricately overlapping red and blue branching lines reveals how these natural and human-made/altered systems interconnect. The overall form that emerges in *history of two worlds* recalls an abstracted, constellation-like human figure. The linework, from this perspective, might then suggest capillaries, drawing a visual connection between these topographies and our own bodies. The form has an arched back and arms outstretched as though captured in the act of dance or falling backward. The shape is not unlike those seen in ancient cave drawings, or perhaps a shape imagined out of a constellation in the night sky. Layers of macroscopic and microscopic worlds draw together in this piece, as references to universal, continental, and anatomical scales collapse into a single image. As such, the piece speaks to geophysiology and the interconnectedness of all things.

Merritt's practice has consistently explored the practice of drawing through expanded means and a conceptual framework grounded in process and experimentation. His work brings complexity to how we

define drawing at its fundamental level, enriching this field of study. A piece like *history of two worlds* exemplifies Merritt's perspective of drawing as an exercise in reduction: drawing as a process of interpretation and selection. It reveals the concept of erasure as something fundamental to how we can understand the medium, even though we tend to describe drawing as an additive process.

This piece also reflects Merritt's ongoing interest in exploring the relationships between human and non-human systems of knowledge, navigation and (re)orientation. A delicate ecosystem is revealed in *history of two worlds*, one that generates metaphorical connections between vascular systems and geographical mapping. The form is reminiscent of Merritt's delicate stick sculptures, likewise created from found and castoff materials. It also recalls his *charts* series of graphite on paper pieces depicting scattered, tangled and morphing networks of lines and forms. The majority of Merritt's work emerges from tree-based materials—including paper, pencils, and branches—and always retains a conceptual connection to these origins. This visual and material language finds a unique and deeply resonant form of expression in *history of two worlds*.