

## Alice Attie – A Brief Biographical Sketch

My background as an artist is somewhat unusual. I graduated from Barnard College in New York City with a degree in French Literature, concentrating in nineteenth century French Poetry. I went on to pursue and receive an MFA in Poetry, under the tutelage of June Jordan. I completed a Ph.D. in Comparative literature several years later. My doctoral dissertation focused on the modern elegy, specifically on the meeting place of language and the unspeakable: how we accommodate what is inaccessible to language.

As a student of poetry, I often read poets who sought to find visual analogues to the mind's investigations. As a student of literature, I was, and continue to be intrigued by writers who labor within language to lift themselves out of it. I cite Kafka, whose works were the focus of many years of study. Kafka in his own life and in his writings, straddled an invisible divide, a horizon from where multiple perspectives could be viewed, a space where the world as he knew it and the worlds of his imagination seemed to share a simultaneity of experience. Kafka felt that writing was a mediation between two worlds, one which allowed for expression while the other hovered, above or within but never in the field of definition. These ideas have been formative to my work in both literary and artistic disciplines.

While I never formally studied art, I have been drawing, with ink, for several years. I have always had a fascination with the relationship between writing and drawing and during my many years of study and teaching, I often composed a visual response to the works I was reading; in my journals, the ink drawings were often re-iterations or re-imaginings of texts I was reading, abstracted from the originals but inspired by them.

I am fascinated by the many ways we can inscribe a page, whatever the scrawl that claims the field may be. My work is often, but not always, an exploration of the possibilities of inscriptions, of the *thinking-drawing-gesturing* that composes works on paper. The more I draw, the more I recognize that the process of pushing into the possibilities of drawing (and being able to access the openings where those possibilities might take root) is always accompanied by a challenge to understand the impulse itself, what is at the root of the desire to draw. Thus, the narrative of my career is also an investigation of what brings me to make art and why my intellectual interests seem so integral and essential to it.

My drawings have been exhibited over the past decade in many venues, including *The Drawing Center* in New York City, the *Weatherspoon Art Museum* in North Carolina, *The de Cordova Sculpture Park and Museum* in Massachusetts, *The Hood Museum* at Dartmouth in New Hampshire, *The McMullen Museum* at Boston College, and the *Santa Barbara Museum of Art* in California. The drawings are in the collections of the *Whitney Museum of American Art* in New York and *The Jewish Museum* in New York City. My collage work is often exhibited in group exhibitions. Drawings and photographs and collages have entered into numerous private collections.

I taught literature for many years, as a part time professor, at Bard College, Barnard College, and Cooper Union. I have also completed numerous many bodies of work in the discipline of photography, with extensive publication of my images in magazines and journals, including *The New Yorker*, *Doubletake*, *Grey Room* and *Parnassus*. My photographs of Harlem appeared as a book entitled *Harlem on the Verge*, published by Norton on 2001. The Whitney Museum is one of many museums that has collected my photographs. (My website, [aliceattie.com](http://aliceattie.com), is devoted solely to photographs.)