Project 1: Transparency



Francis Picabia, Transparence 1932

Due Date: **ART304-01 – Tuesday April 7th 2026 (Critique)**

Up to now, you have been assigned homework and exercises that have been structured and sequenced to give you the ideal preparation to begin this first project. Six weeks of exercises have taken you through line and tone, through graphite, colored pencil, ballpoint, water-soluble graphite, conté, and pen and

brush with ink, and through papers, toned and black grounds, and alternative surfaces. You have drawn from life, from memory and from imagination. This project asks you to put all of that to work on a single idea.

The most important element of the work named above is helping you to understand and engage in *process*. When you approach this project, you will use the ways of developing ideas and converting them to drawings. In this case, it is for a project assigned to you, but ultimately we are working towards a final project that you determine. That is why that project is called Autonomy.

Transparency

The project title has two meanings and both are open to you.

The first is literal: a material that lets light through. Glass, water, plastic wrap, a veil, tracing paper, vellum, acetate, a thinned wash of ink. The second is figurative: openness, the condition of being seen through, of having nothing hidden. A drawing is a good place to test both, because a drawing is built from layers of marks and its history usually stays visible. The first line is still there beneath the last.

Here are four ways into the project. They are not a menu, and they combine.

- **Seeing through.** Draw transparent and reflective things: a glass of water, a bottle, a plastic bag, a window with something behind it. This builds on Exercise 5. What are you actually drawing: the object, the thing behind it, or the distortion between them?
- **Drawing that is transparent.** Use translucent surfaces (tracing paper, vellum, drafting film, acetate, thin fabric), draw on both sides of a sheet, stack sheets so that lower layers show through, or build thinned ink washes and glazes of colored pencil where each layer stays visible.
- **Transparency as structure.** The overlapping planes of Cubism, the transparent geometry of Constructivism and Rauschenberg's transfers, in which printed images show through fabric and paper, are all ways of organizing a picture so that you see through one thing to another.
- **Transparency as idea.** What is revealed and what is concealed? X-rays, cross-sections, maps, plans and anatomical drawings all make the inside visible (look again at the exquisite corpse drawing from Exercise 6, which shows the body's interior). Transparency is also a word we use about institutions, systems and each other. You might draw that.

These are just a few ways that you could approach Transparency as the prompt for a drawing. I invite you to think of other ways. I am happy to talk about it with you.



Robert Rauschenberg Erased DeKooning Drawing, 1958

Process

There is a huge array of possible interpretations of this project title. The notion of transparency should be thoroughly explored before you settle upon a final image to draw. NEVER approach a drawing thinking about what it will be when

it is finished. You need to always begin with experimentation, and allow the work to develop as it needs to. You should not rush to make choices, especially when starting out.

Test your ideas on at least three different combinations of tool and surface before you commit to your final drawing, and include at least one translucent surface in those tests. Failures are part of the work. Keep them, and include them in your submission.

My role in the creative working classes will shift now that this project begins. I will be guiding each of you as you begin developing ideas and making. I will be looking at your sketchbooks most weeks, and offering you references and other forms of help with your work.

Expectations

1. A fully realized, completed drawing (or a group of drawings, if that is what your idea needs). This can be made in any way that is appropriate for your ideas, with any drawing tools and on any surface. The only restriction is that it is a drawing.
2. All supporting material: studies, drawings, notes, clippings, tool and surface tests, creative research. This can and should be in your sketchbook, but it may take another form, such as a JSTOR library of images. If you don't know what this is, take the time to look at the Library's website to learn. You might also use other tools from the library, such as Films on Demand. Any digital resource you use will need to be shared with me in some way. We can talk about how that will be done on a case by case basis.
3. Photographs of your completed drawing, uploaded to the assignment link on Canvas.

Rubric

This project is graded on the five criteria in the course rubric (Aim; Organization and Development; Method; Communication; Technique). Its weight in your course grade and the A–F descriptions are in the syllabus rubric.