



# Drawing for Pierced Relief

Mary Martin

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Drawing for Pierced Relief

**Artist/Maker:** Mary Martin

**Born:** 1960

**Object Type:** Drawing

**Materials:** Paper

**Accession Number:** MO160

**Historic Period:** 20th century

**Production Place:** Britain, England, Europe

**Copyright:** © Estate of Kenneth and Mary Martin

**Credit Line:** Bequeathed by Joyce and Michael Morris, 2014

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In this drawing Mary Martin demonstrates how the positive and negative spaces formed by a single line informed the composition of *Pierced Relief* (1959). [1] Martin had developed a theory of minimal drawing in the 1950s, influenced in part by the artist Paul Klee. She highlights the significance of minimal drawing for the *Pierced Relief* series in a statement published in the journal *Studio International*, with an image of *Pierced Relief* (1959):

‘The first constructed reliefs I made were based on the moving format of Cubism combined with a system of positive and negative spaces (1951-4). The positive-negative line of Paul Klee helped me to break out of this [...] I was developing a theory of minimal drawing which culminated in the arrangement of the walls in No.9 ‘This is Tomorrow’ Whitechapel 1956. The series of *Pierced Reliefs* were also based on minimal drawing.’ [2]

Michael Morris was an early supporter of Mary Martin’s work, sharing her confidence in the new aesthetic possibilities that constructed abstract art presented. Morris acquired *Pierced Relief* (1959) from Martin in 1960, after seeing it in the exhibition *Essays in Movement: Reliefs by Mary Martin, Mobiles by Kenneth Martin* at the ICA in London.

Lisa Newby, January 2021

[1] *Pierced Relief* (1959) is in the Sainsbury Centre Collection, 31562. For an overview of Mary Martin’s work and the significance of the *Pierced Relief* series, see Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), pp.151-166. Grieve refers directly to this drawing in the footnote on p.267.

[2] ‘Statement by Mary Martin, December 1967’, published in Alan Bowness ‘The Constructive art of Mary Martin’, *Studio International*, 175, No. 898 (March 1968), p.121.

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## Provenance

In October 1984, the University of East Anglia accepted a planned bequest from Joyce and Michael Morris (UEA Alumni). Michael died in 2009 and Joyce in December 2014 when the couple's wishes were implemented.

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