INTRODUCTION
Rubbing—the technique of rendering an image by placing a sheet of paper over an object or textured surface and rubbing it with graphite or another marking agent—is one of the most ancient and enduring drawing practices. It was used in China as early as the sixth century to record notable inscriptions and designs on carved stones, and from this primal root it has evolved into an evocative and sophisticated form of artistic expression. It is also the forebear of frottage, which Surrealist artist Max Ernst claimed to have discovered in 1925 while gazing at the floorboards of a hotel room on the coast of France. Whereas a rubbing involves the reproduction of a particular item, a frottage is formed by a variety of rubbings executed on a single sheet that together produce imagery that is unrelated to their sources. Ernst created a plethora of imaginary forms and otherworldly creatures by lifting the textures of wood, leaves, crumpled paper, string, and other found material onto paper. As a technique dependent as much on chance as on choice, frottage became a fundamental element of Surrealist drawing. Since then, artists have adopted and reinterpreted these methods of draftsmanship, and they continue to be a source of experimentation in studios today.

This exhibition is the first to devote itself to these versatile techniques, bringing together a diverse yet singularly focused selection of drawings from the mid-nineteenth century to now. The relatively simple procedures of rubbing and frottage—which combine elements of drawing, printmaking, and sculpture—generate compositions that capture both the indexical and the more elusive properties of objects. They have an intrinsically evanescent and fugitive character, which led the French poet and painter Henri Michaux to refer to his own shadowy frottages as “apparitions.” Each of the works on view is distinguished by the individual gesture of its maker, and together they form a lexicon of the language of touch.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS
Apparitions and Curatorial Adventures
Monday, September 14, 7:30 p.m.
Exhibition curator Allegra Pesenti discusses the realization of Apparitions and explores the diverse works, sites, and cultures that she encountered during its preliminary stages.

What’s the Rub?
Saturday, November 7, 8:00 p.m.
In conjunction with the exhibition, composer and percussionist Glen Kotche, well known as the drummer of Wilco, presents this solo performance, which includes new work commissioned for this event. Seating is limited.

All public programs are free and open to the public.

RELATED PUBLICATION
Apparitions: Frottages and Rubbings from 1860 to Now
Allegra Pesenti, with contributions by Leslie Cozzi and Clare Elliott
132 pages, 121 illus.
Hardcover, $55
Available at the Menil Collection Bookstore

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Max Ernst, The Sap Rises, Rises (La sève monte, monte), 1925. Graphite frottage on paper mounted on paper, 8 1/8 x 6 3/8 inches (20.5 x 16 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston. © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP. Photo: Paul Hester

Shrouded Skeleton, ca. 1860. Wax rubbing on paper, 31 1/2 x 23 1/2 inches (80 x 60 cm). Société de Antiquaires of London. Photo: Todd Hido. Art Photography

APPARITIONS
FROTTAGES AND RUBBINGS FROM 1860 TO NOW
THE MENIL COLLECTION


Max Ernst, The Sap Rises, Rises (La sève monte, monte), 1925. Graphite frottage on paper mounted on paper, 8 1/8 x 6 3/8 inches (20.5 x 16 cm). The Menil Collection, Houston. © 2015 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP. Photo: Paul Hester

Shrouded Skeleton, ca. 1860. Wax rubbing on paper, 31.5 x 23.5 inches (80 x 60 cm). Society of Antiquaries of London. Photo: Todd Hido. Art Photography
sculptural figure by the Chicago painter and printmaker Ellen Lanyon demonstrates the use of rubbing and its manifestations in the work of a diverse group of artists. By highlighting aspects that may not be visible to the naked eye, the traces can help artists to see more clearly than the subject itself, whether in terms of its history, its function, or its personal or social significance. Domestic objects assume a new presence as they are abstracted from their settings through the process of transfer. The indelible effects of time are revealed in Robert Overley’s etchings, instantaneous rubbings of ruins and walls, while Anna Barnhill suspends time in her dessin work "Snow Door with Fish Yellow," 2011. Elements of nature have also been lifted onto the surface of paper through rubbing. In a large scroll that billows from the wall, Michelle Stuart’s traces of rubble from the ground evoke a star-studded sky, seemingly turning the world upside down. While Stuart was proposing an alternative form of abstraction that situated itself in the realm of Land Art in the 1970s, she also challenged the traditional boundaries of craftsmanship with her singular physical process in these types of monumental drawings. Rubbings can be suggestive of a historical narrative but also manifestly autobiographical and deeply personal. Zaria provides the technique to visualize the memory of a specific place she visited in a few sketches in the Land of Corfu. The work was drawn from a worldview inspired by the stone path that leads to the Xiaso Stele Museum, a former Confucian temple that now houses the largest collection of stone steles in China. It is the artist’s attempt to trace her trajectory and pay tribute to the memory of a man's street.” In this work, the artist records a history of place that is tied to her own and, in doing so, emphasizes what may be contended and perhaps invisible to another viewer. Through the indexical traces of all these explorations, there emerges the imprint of the artist’s identity.

FROTTAGE AND SURREALISM

Drawing was an essential form of expression for artists associated with Surrealism, the art-istic and literary movement led by the French poet André Breton from 1924 through World War II. Writing in the wake of Surrealism’s analytical depiction of dreams, Breton advocated an unhinged mode of expression and called on artists to explore the uncharted depths of the mind. With this in mind, Munera打破了一种形式上的自由创作模式，可以将图像的无形化与弥补操纵的意识相结合。The work with Munera’s street consists of 1925 and to create his own realm of the imagery of the unconscious while relinquishing the conscious use of the technique of rubbing and its manifestations in the work of a diverse group of artists. By highlighting aspects that may not be visible to the naked eye, the traces can help artists to see more clearly than the subject itself, whether in terms of its history, its function, or its personal or social significance. Domestic objects assume a new presence as they are abstracted from their settings through the process of transfer. The indelible effects of time are revealed in Robert Overley’s etchings, instantaneous rubbings of ruins and walls, while Anna Barnhill suspends time in her dessin work “Snow Door with Fish Yellow,” 2011. Elements of nature have also been lifted onto the surface of paper through rubbing. In a large scroll that billows from the wall, Michelle Stuart’s traces of rubble from the ground evoke a star-studded sky, seemingly turning the world upside down. While Stuart was proposing an alternative form of abstraction that situated itself in the realm of Land Art in the 1970s, she also challenged the traditional boundaries of craftsmanship with her singular physical process in these types of monumental drawings. Rubbings can be suggestive of a historical narrative but also manifestly autobiographical and deeply personal. Zaria provides the technique to visualize the memory of a specific place she visited in a few sketches in the Land of Corfu. The work was drawn from a worldview inspired by the stone path that leads to the Xiaso Stele Museum, a former Confucian temple that now houses the largest collection of stone steles in China. It is the artist’s attempt to trace her trajectory and pay tribute to the memory of a man’s street.” In this work, the artist records a history of place that is tied to her own and, in doing so, emphasizes what may be contended and perhaps invisible to another viewer. Through the indexical traces of all these explorations, there emerges the imprint of the artist’s identity.

PHANTOMS

The basic function of a rubbing is to create a concrete impression of an object, yet paradoxically the type of drawing can also evoke the elusive spirit that might exist within an object or the human figure. While the works in this exhibition draw on material and physical bodies, many encapsulate a sense of immortality. Their subjects oscillate between presence and absence like ghostly apparitions. Among the artists featured are several women from different European countries who adopted the technique in the 1970s to render intimate expressions of “being.” The Swiss artist Heidi Bächli, for instance, rubbed sculptural reliefs made out of her clothing to create spectral portraits of the self. The fantastic and eroticized imitations made by the body of the polished artist Alina Szapocznikow are similarly voluble. Marked by her experience of being instilled in Nazi concentration camps and the site of her birthplace, they reflect an urgent desire to capture the body and express both the sponta-neously inherent in their making and the fragility of human existence. Czech artist Adriana Šimotová’s figures are allusive and groundless, yet poignantly present through their human scale and the aggressive gestures of their making. She said of her work, “I merely try to capture that almost uncapturable point at which something still exists, but at the same time is dying.” In contrast to these figurative renditions, Alighiero Boetti’s eerie rubbing of an empty wicker chair emphasizes the absence of the sitter, although the artist’s presence is felt through the very description of his belongings. This haunting quality of the technique is also felt in Steven Gibson’s “Cave” and “River Queen: Deir el Bahari,” 2011; a triptych of rubbings on optically textured paper. They partake in a sense of teleologically intrinsic to all these fleeting, phantom-like forms and their attempt to capture the passage of time.