

Drawn to Life

Every sketch is the beginning of something.

Olin is a place where ideas begin to take shape. Sketches become prototypes, prototypes become experiments, and experiments become new ways of thinking about engineering, design, and the world. Like the Phoenix—the symbol of Olin—ideas are constantly evolving, transforming, and taking new forms.

Drawn to Life invites members of the Olin community to imagine the future through drawing. Through a three-part experience spanning the weeks leading up to the inauguration and the ceremony itself, individual sketches become a collective portrait of Olin—one that celebrates creativity, imagination, and the community's shared vision for what comes next.

Rather than exhibiting finished artwork, the installation celebrates the sketch as the beginning of an idea. Every drawing captures a possibility still being explored, refined, and imagined. Together, these individual ideas gradually contribute to a shared vision for Olin's future.

Act I — Drawing the Future

The project begins with a simple one- or two-day community workshop.

Members of the Olin community are invited to create a drawing in response to prompts about Olin's future, engineering, creativity, or the challenges they hope to solve. Alumni and families who cannot attend in person may also participate by submitting drawings digitally or by mail.

Rather than focusing on artistic ability, the workshop celebrates drawing as a tool for thinking, imagining, and communicating ideas. Sketches may be abstract, technical, playful, or conceptual.

By the end of the workshop, the community has created a collection of drawings that represents a diverse set of ideas, aspirations, and possibilities for Olin's future.

Act II — Bringing Drawings to Life

The collected drawings are exhibited in a central campus location where students, faculty, staff, and visitors naturally pass throughout the day.

Using AI-assisted visualization, the sketches gradually come to life through subtle animation and transformation. Rather than replacing the original drawings, the installation extends them—allowing ideas to evolve while preserving the character and spontaneity of each hand-drawn sketch.

The artwork is not static. Using motion tracking, the movement and activity of people around the installation continuously influence the visualization. As members of the Olin community gather, walk by, pause, and interact with one another, their presence becomes part of the artwork itself. In this way, the everyday life of Olin's campus—its rhythms, encounters, and movement—helps shape the evolving composition.

Over the course of the exhibition, both the community's drawings and the community's activity contribute to a single collective visualization. The installation transforms individual sketches into a living portrait of Olin—one continually shaped by the imagination and presence of its community.

Act III — Bringing the Collective Vision to the Inauguration

As the exhibition concludes, the collective visualization inspired by the community's drawings becomes a shared visual artifact of the project.

Depending on the goals and logistics of the inauguration, the evolving artwork could be incorporated into the ceremony in a variety of ways—for example, as a projected visualization, a digital display, or as visual material that complements selected inauguration communications or commemorative pieces (such as a postcard). The exact form would be developed collaboratively with the inauguration team based on the event's needs and available production resources.

Rather than highlighting individual drawings, the collective visualization represents the imagination, creativity, and aspirations of the Olin community—a shared vision created through hundreds of sketches and shaped by the daily movement and activity of people around the installation.

Following the ceremony, visitors are invited back to the exhibition, where they can continue exploring the original drawings alongside the evolving collective visualization, discovering how individual ideas and the life of the campus came together to create a shared portrait of Olin at the beginning of a new chapter.

Visualization Description:

The visualization is conceived as a living visual ecosystem rather than a finished image. It continuously oscillates between the individual and the collective. At times, fragments of the original sketches—hand-drawn lines, textures, gestures, and compositions—emerge into view; at others, they dissolve and merge into an evolving abstract landscape. The drawings never disappear. Instead, they remain embedded within the visualization, continually resurfacing and recombining over time.

The movement and activity of people around the installation further shape this evolving composition. As members of the Olin community gather, walk by, pause, and interact with one another, their presence subtly influences how drawings emerge, combine, separate, and transform. In this way, the artwork is shaped not only by the community's imagination, but also by the everyday life of the campus itself.