

James William Murray - Notes on graphite 2022

hardness akin to
talc-gypsum
fractures
into curved shavings
or scrapings produced by a knife blade
dull, clay-like texture
displays no visible crystalline affinities
form dimensions are thin in one direction
non-fluorescent
non-magnetic

grind	paint	sand
mix	feather	burnish
suspend	smooth	polish

working with graphite
is to wrestle with its
lubricating qualities
it's 'not wanting to stick'
resistance to the surface

working with graphite
is a negotiation
between material and surface
a delicate process
requiring a mediator

graphite
brother of diamond
absorbs and reflects
light simultaneously
warm and inviting
human touch

graphite
'my grey'
my go-to
a field-making tool

nebulous
twinkling
Far West Texas
nightsky

what else
but graphite?

recall
some six thousand years ago
somewhere in the Tejas Presidio Desert

you climbed forty feet of igneous rock
barefoot into the mouth
of a cave
with a stick of graphite
you traced the outline of your left hand
on the cave wall
when night fell
you drew visions
of lizard men and aircraft
and encampments along the Rio Grande
by the light of
the full buck moon

the appearance of the material changes
when built up in multiple layers
I attempt to reach a level of density
at which the material exceeds itself
the sum of the parts greater
than the infindesimal speck of pigment