

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

CITYPAPER

INTERVAL AFFAIRS: GROUP SHOW DANCES IN THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL SPACES IN BETWEEN ARTISTS' FUNDAMENTAL MARKS

BETWEEN THE LINES, just unveiled at Maryland Art Place, is the kind of show for we who find extraordinary material use--and the reserved elegance of screaming in a sound chamber--of particular appeal. The organizers of the group-curated show--headed up by Kay Hwang, MAP's Advisory Committee chair, in partnership with MAP committee members--invited or otherwise included Donald Baechler, Linda Bills, Line Bruntse, Louise Bourgeois, Ellen Gallagher, Nancy Linden, Linn Meyers, Amy Eva Raehse, Ann Rentschler, Beverly Ress, Cornel Rubino, Youngmi Song-Organ, and David Webster to provide approaches to the committee's core directive. Except for one oddity by Bourgeois, the exhibition has the coherent concentration and aesthetic of a single organizing mind. Without accompanying curatorial explanations Between the Line's viewpoint is stated simply through its title and clarifying objects. It invites visitors to think in all directions about lines. While a line element might traditionally have meant horizon or the contours of the material world--a vase, a tree, a face--contemporary lines, as this exhibition's name indicates, are more interested in the disclosure of underlying events. The collected works in the show distinctly demonstrate an active, peeling quality.

Meyers' numinous works give an echoing tone to ink drawn on fluid Mylar. Softly spiraling and radiating outward from a source point in a contour, her lines reverberate slightly and amplify their wiggled pitch through each subsequent one's response to the former: The work suggests a sound wave, too subtle and indeterminate for human hearing. Bills' series of square paintings, "The Nature of Experience," also possesses a sonar quality, but one much harsher on the ears: staccato striations like nails scratched deeply across a brown board. These works are beautiful in spite of that feeling, but they are acute and cacophonous and without a moment's rest. Two artists, Rentschler and Webster, consider the spiraling line as a sensitized coil. Rentschler's pieces have a calculating approach. Her large, fuzzy charcoal roll of cross-sectioned yarnlike material sends roving feelers out to collect data and draw it inward.

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Webster offers a gastrointestinal complaint, "Acid Indigestion." Made of graphite on scorched and puckered Mylar, this black on white, coiling view of a digestive process comes with a droll name but appears to issue straight from the gut. While still on the subject of the body's nether regions, it's a good time to mention the Bourgeois litho "Eight in Bed," brightly illuminated and royally sited on the red signage wall. A ha-ha-cute orgy cartoon, it is narrow, blatant, and unprofound taken with the rest of the show. Aside from being a Bourgeois--which is certainly something--what is it doing in this show? It does, indeed, possess the requisite lines of a drawing, but there isn't much between them. It skips instead of ranges; it's merely trophy celebrity ballast. Donald Baechler, too--weighing in with his very Baechler-esque little works on paper at an impressive \$4,300--may also help to press the point that an artist needn't be in "blue chip"-sanctioned territory to carry the true force of the exhibition. This is what Song-Organ, Ress, and Rubino particularly do, however, each in his or her unorthodox manner. These pieces are proto-canonical how-can-they-do-that or how-did-they-think-of-that works. Ress' "Untitled, 2006" is a highly evolved representative of her recent, wondrous group of cutout drawings. These meticulous colored-pencil drawings float on expanses of white paper and share the paper's large open fields of emptiness with corresponding cutouts. Connected through a paper umbilical cord to its originating opening--which, importantly, is not severed during the process--the released cutout reaffixes to the page, made sculptural through the artist's folding and bending techniques. In this particular work, a three-dimensional ammonite form emerges to furl from the gaping paper reaching into its own structure. The enveloping form is inspired by the Klein Bottle theory of the universe, which illustrates how time and space cooperate on theoretical levels as a 3-D Möbius strip: a long, penetrable funnel that is simultaneously both inside and outside itself. Ress' visual product is an equally miraculous event in and of itself.

Song-Organ's stunning work offers a similar oblique impact, although it's even less directly noticeable. The delicate murmuring lines in her mixed-media drawings have an obvious affinity with Meyers' drawings, but when you read the accompanying wall text--which reveals that Song-Organ's ghostly mathematical curves and forms are, in fact, drawn with her own long hair--the work feels almost unbelievable.

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The graphite rendering on 12 gessoed panels "The Left as Perceived From the Right--The Right as Perceived From the Left" is the brilliant sort of caricature piece that embarrasses lesser ones. Rubino's piece on the perversities of our bipolar society could be considered lewdly comical were it not for its underlying ring of truth. Take the title literally: His figures engage in the sort of disturbing activities that validate the other side's worst suspicions about them. Rubino's stylishly awkward, outlined forms are of a quirky cartoon perfection that maintain their eloquent kick in the groin throughout each of the panels. Such is the show's interstitial gift: Between the Lines supplies a sophisticated array of exploratory works based on the simple line, that most primary mark in art-making.

