

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

dcist

LINN MEYERS @ THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

The Phillips Collection is currently hosting a series it calls *Intersections*, in which the work of several contemporary artists was commissioned to produce work in dialogue with one of the artists in the museum's general collection. Among these is Washington resident [Linn Meyers](#)' intricate wall drawing *at the time being*. The piece's dense web of lines can be seen through archways behind Van Gogh's *The Road Menders* (1889), and echo Van Gogh's distinctive brushstroke -- and perhaps a bit of his mad drive. The drawing took two weeks of intense concentration to complete, and while the work may be seen as pleasantly decorative, if you stare at it long enough, you can imagine being immersed in the lines as if immersed in the brushstroke of the Dutch master himself. Just try not to imagine you are living inside *Wheat Field with Crows* (1890), as iconic a picture of mental disorder as has ever graced a museum. A docent told DCist that children gravitate towards Meyers' work, enthralled by the pulsing wall whose web of lines make it seem it is falling away from you. "My work relies on the beauty of imperfection. I often use the word slippage to describe this," Meyers says, and it is the imperfection of her lines and this slippage that gives her lines a character beyond mere optical illusion. Meyers' drawing will be painted over after August 22. Meyers embraces the work's ephemeral nature and hopes this will "challenge the viewer to think about the fleeting nature of these experiences and to recognize the more lasting nature of the effect these experiences might have on us." Meyers was kind enough to talk to DCist about her work.

Children gravitate to the wall, and I wonder if they're jealous that you were commissioned to do something they'd get in trouble for! When I was a child I wrote "KIMBA" on my bedroom wall with Vicks VapoRub. Do you remember drawing on the wall as a child?

I can't claim anything as cool as a Vicks VapoRub KIMBA. I did, however, draw a picture of my family on the wall in the bathroom when I was about three or four. My dad had to paint over it four times because my pencil marks were so "insistent".

My "KIMBA" was on my bedroom wall for years. I don't remember getting into trouble because of it.

I'm so jealous of your KIMBA piece -- Vicks VapoRub is a brilliant medium for that!

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Ha! Thanks! The ephemeral nature of your work reminds me of Zen sand paintings. Do you feel there's an element of ritual in your work?

The dictionary definition of "ritual" says "any practice or pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set manner." My process is too unpredictable to be called a ritual -- I don't have a picture in my mind of what a drawing will look like when it's finished, there are always lots of surprises. Although I have a certain approach that I use to begin my drawings, it isn't "set". When I make a wall drawing, the initial planning phase is driven by the space in which I will be working and the way that the piece develops within that space is effected by that architecture as well. I do love some of the rituals that others practice, but I'm just not disciplined in that way -- I'm looking for something novel in each project or drawing.

You referenced Zen sand paintings...I love the idea of breaking down our ideas about permanence and preciousness. The Phillips Collection is all about preserving works of art that are deemed important in terms of the story of art history. I think that's great. I also think that the experience of the viewer in front of the works is precious. The drawing that I made in the museum is intentionally impermanent, which shifts the focus away from object-ness and re-focuses our understanding of the piece in terms of its ephemerality. Viewers seem to have a lot of discomfort with the fact that the piece will be painted over at the end of the summer -- it's a thought that seems to really bother people. Part of this has to do with our tendency to want to preserve things that we like, but it also relates to our general discomfort with mortality and the fleeting nature of life.

Is this the first time you've let a work go like this?

I have done a fair number of wall drawings that only exist in memory and pictures now. I really do love the fact that they are physically gone forever but that they are not really gone.

Your lines echo Van Gogh's work in a technical sense, but also perhaps in a psychological sense. Is there madness in your method?

I'm not convinced that Van Gogh's lines are crazy -- I'm not saying anything about his mental state, I'm just talking about his marks. I do believe, though, that what he was doing seemed completely nuts in the context of the period in which he was working. What do you think?

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I wonder if the world has caught up with Van Gogh, that his fragmented prism has been so absorbed into visual culture since his time that such a style isn't necessarily a sign of madness! But the obsessiveness of it still intrigues me, the intense level of focus, while remaining open to your surroundings, that I imagine must go into your technique as well.

Intense focus yes, obsessiveness no. I can say that for sure as far as me and my technique are concerned, and it's the feeling that I get about Van's work also. Although I guess "obsessive" is subjective, so maybe this means nothing anyway. I do like the idea of intense focus without blocking out the other stimuli. In a way that's so 21st Century -- it falls into a vague category of multi-tasking, don't you think? *Linn Meyers'* "at the time being" *can be seen on the second floor of [The Phillips Collection](#) through August 22nd.*

