

Review of Systems, Working Drawings at Paragraph Gallery by Dana Self, "Work Ethics," The Pitch, May 3, 2007

The three past Charlotte Street Award winners exhibiting their work in *Systems, Working Drawings* easily demonstrate why they earned those awards. James Woodfill, Marcie Miller Gross and Anne Lindberg, all primarily known for their sculptures, have redrawn their sculptural impulses here. A working drawing is often a preparatory sketch, a way to work out a structural problem in a work of art. Here the artists have created new drawings, geared toward the intricacies of the Paragraph Gallery's space. Monumental in scale and in installation, the drawings extend the sculptural practices in which the three artists typically engage.

The works charge the space with a sculptural presence, even though they are, in essence, flat. Woodfill's work has the most conspicuous effect on the space by neutralizing the gallery's architectural dominance. Because it is multileveled, with varied ceiling heights, and is disrupted by a large concrete column, the gallery itself tends to compete dynamically with the art. Installing most of his drawings on wires intersecting the room, Woodfill encourages viewers to question their perceptual values about the site: How has the artist intervened and redrawn the space? What does this place feel like or seem like now?

The exhibition's press materials note that these three artists also share an interest in systems: "systems of thought, gesture, manufacture; motion, accumulation."

Woodfill's drawings are multilayered investigations of systems, often geared toward dismantling them. A rapidograph and pen plotter create the first pattern, on top of which Woodfill places vinyl cuttings that he has designed in a second wave of pattern. He's examining the etymology of systems and how they can be manipulated and ultimately humanized. The pattern made with the pen plotter, though mechanically reproduced, allows for subtle organic changes where the pen failed slightly or created a slight variation in its ink application. Those variations — or, as Woodfill would say, the "glitches in the system" — are what humanize the works and often more actively engage the viewer. We, too, want to see the hiccup in the system. The tendency to deconstruct is human nature.

Looking for authenticity, we may feel a connection to the artist when we see what we might interpret as an imperfection or, more accurately, a sign that the work is real, that what we see is living and, in a sense, breathing. Woodfill uses color — beautiful pinks, yellows, blues and silver — simply as a way to differentiate the works from one another and to distinguish systems and their component parts from one another.

Anne Lindberg's monumental hand-drawn pieces relate to Woodfill's in their repetition. Her drawings are beautiful mark-making. By altering the pressure she places on the pencil while she's drawing vertical lines, Lindberg creates undulations that, with visual distance, almost begin to seem figural. Her pieces trade on the sheer physicality of the artist's hand. We feel her corporeal presence in those long vertical lines, and we think about where she might have stopped to rest or attune her body to the rhythmic system of drawing. Woodfill's drawings remind us of mechanical systems of technology; Lindberg's suggest time, memory and the operating systems of the body.

Gross' installation seems to map the systems in her studio. Her sculptural work often focuses on folded and repeated objects that conceptualize systems of production. In this installation, she has staked out gallery space to examine the territory of her own methods, giving the work a problem-solving sensibility — and revealing the conscientiousness of her studio practice.

And that is why all three artists are Charlotte Street Award winners: This exhibition reveals the rigor with which each approaches his or her mark-making.