

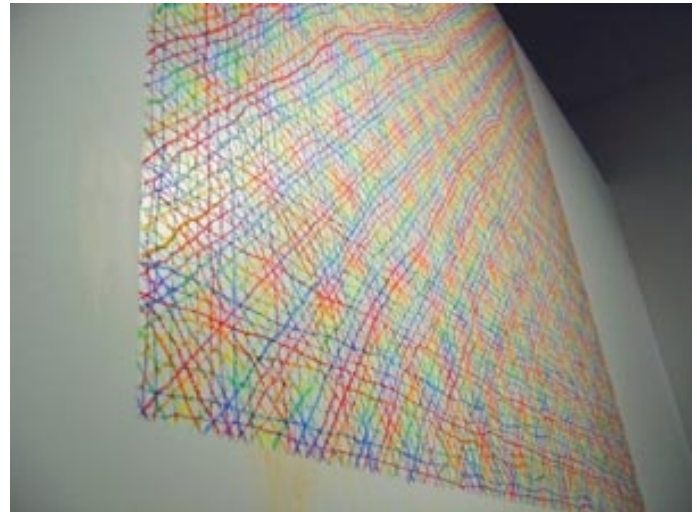


Ott, Sabina. "BROAD SHOULDERS." *Stretcher*, July 2005, [https://www.stretcher.org/features/broad\\_shoulders/](https://www.stretcher.org/features/broad_shoulders/).

## BROAD SHOULDERS

Xylor Jane: Say when.  
Michelle Grabner: Project Room  
April 29-May 28, 2005

Is it possible to resuscitate the 20th century obsession with the grid? Is it desirable? In the case of Xylor Jane's paintings and drawings at Wendy Cooper gallery the answer is yes. While early grid paintings celebrated a kind of limitless expansion, these drawings make use of the constraints imposed by measurement. In a way, her paintings have nothing to do with grids, modernism, or minimalism (just as bondage has nothing to do with ropes) but with the desire for limits, containment, and the ecstatic moments such restraints can produce. There are many moments of ecstasy in this show of small intense marks and bits of writing generated by mathematical and scientific formulas. The



marks the artist makes do not challenge the territory they delineate, nor would the territory exist without the marks that define them. There is no struggle here, no token acts of resistance, but a pleasurable ritual of exchange. The result is that each drawing creates its own vibration. It's as if the wholehearted use of convention short circuits its own nature by insistence. The resulting group of drawings/paintings is surprisingly fresh, just as the sensations created by B&D (ed.-bondage and discipline) can feel new each time precisely because of their familiar rituals. [See more of Jane's work in Bay Area Now 4 at [Yerba Buena Center for the Arts](#).

Her drawings are paired with paintings by Michelle Grabner. At first their work seems similar—and one can sense a common ground (a celebration of 20th century modernism in all its glory for one!), but as one moves between the two bodies of work the differences between them reverberate. The two exhibits are positioned in a didactic relationship: grid/spiral, light/dark, external/internal. Jane's paintings refer to complex formulas that are held in check by their own systems while Grabner's simple and direct paintings feel like a force of nature. In Grabner's work there is no codex necessary, the artist finds a generating point and proceeds to mark her territory with a series of dots expanding into spirals. Following the tradition of the aboriginal painters of Australia each dot is both a whole world onto itself and one part among many.

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Almost geological forces such as evaporation and pressure determine the visual effects of the paintings. Her form and technique is so transparent one is drawn into the optical sensation of the paintings immediately. With simple and direct means Grabner has managed to make us dizzy with the rhythm of expansion and contraction.