

ArtReview

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“Traces Everywhere”

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Tracy Williams Ltd, New York

(+1 212 229 2757, www.tracywilliamsLtd.com)

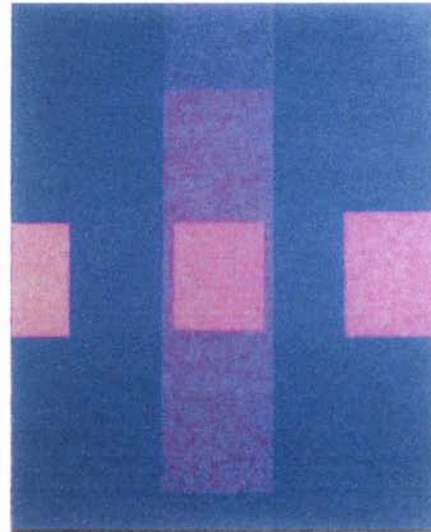
Review by Joao Ribas

Works on paper are often treated as graphic correlatives to the rambling essay, their immediacy supposedly typifying that literary form's ideal of slapdash capriciousness. A further fall into minor status comes from drawing's role in the banalities of studio practice. Yet perhaps by virtue of being performative in the assaying of meaning, the gestures of the medium have become primary productive modes. Embracing this aesthetic imperative, 'Traces Everywhere' captured the medium's multiplicity. But what gave the show poignancy was a claim for the work on paper as a discrete and singularly creative medium.

The clarion call was Zipora Fried's *Untitled (Fall)* (2004), a large graphite drawing unfurling off a wall and across the floor. Its material and conceptual density takes 'work on paper' to its categorical limit, line promoted to mass verging on sculptural volume. Fried stretches her economy of means - a durative scribble meticulously repeated for months - to a vibrancy of minimalist form.

On the opposite end of the formal scale lies Wes Mills' penciled indeterminacy, a kind of irreverent use of line as grapheme. Juxtaposed with Judy Ledgerwood's painterly loops and drips - silvery gestures of expressive abstraction - the range of pictorial registers seemed remarkably wide. Olav Christopher Jenssen's decorative pastels risibly tackled the eternal problem of the 'frame' with a kind of humorous compositional touch only drawing can indulge.

The medium was made to sustain diversity of subject matter, not just variety of formal possibility. Matt Mullican's mirthless stick figures collapsed sign systems by wittily mixing affective text and apparently inexpressive line. Fiona Banner's graphalalia - transcriptions of



dialogue from violent Hollywood films - begs some necessary questions about representative content. As do Daniel Hesidence's uneasy anatomies of fleshly distension, apparent aberrations all the more grotesque by their ambiguity. As a counterpoint, drawing is almost a mirror into the vicissitudes of artistic consciousness for Ouattara Watts, whose pictorial spiritualism can only benefit from its spontaneity.

An assured sense of boundaries kept the show from simply being a drawing survey. Watercolours contoured by graphite and acetone by Pedro Cabrita Reis mark his architectural assemblages as paintings in landscape; they also prove the sketchbook is still a productive mode of enquiry. Joe Fyfe's collages use handmade paper, felt and newspaper, texture replacing line as their governing formal principle. But it was Ernst Caramelle's delicate outlines of isohels and graded colour, made by paper exposed to the sun, which revealed one of the medium's most engaging facets: a propensity for stirring intimacy through quiet gestures.

Above: Ernst Caramelle, *Untitled (Purple)*, 1991, paper exposed to sunlight, 30.5 x 22.9cm