

Christopher Hart Chambers, "Ruminations in Paper – Drew Shiflett at Lesley Heller Gallery In New York," *Dart International*, Volume 12, Number 1, Spring/Summer 2009

Ruminations in Paper

Drew Shiflett at Lesley Heller Gallery in New York by Christopher Hart Chambers

Buzzed in to Lesley Heller's gallery on the ground floor of a townhouse on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where we find an intimate space: a converted split level apartment, with a backyard sculpture area – not your standard Manhattan art viewing arena. Drew Shiflett's work fits well here. It is also intimate, and, it's obsessively personal.

In the front room there were three small framed works, and one larger free hanging piece was clipped to the wall. Rumpled patchworks in muted neutral tones: browns, off whites; grays, and tans are gently crafted from bits of handmade paper scrappily glued together. Quietly maintained squares and multitudes of rhythmically incised lines – long, lengthwise horizontals and short, choppy verticals – crosshatch creating grids a few inches across, again and again. Shiflett's soft and lovely compositions of underlying geometric shapes and endless demarcations sprawl across the wall, or are incarcerated in frames like bits of ancient tapestry. They look like sections of fabric with custom stitching, but are made using paper, watercolor, conte, and ink. Her work would be lost in a raucous art fair or cavernous Chelsea gallery, but here they command a quiet presence; an island of calm in the molten art world.

In the central kitchen area two larger works were on display. One, a little older and more sculptural than the rest of the work in the exhibition, consists of row upon row of little slats of blond paper, like the output from a paper shredder, glued over a gauzy material bunched up at the top like a bed roll. The abstract image on the other piece resembles a truck axle: a square at either end joined by a horizontal linear shape with a bulb in the middle. There is a corridor leading to another small room in the back. In here the compositions were a touch more complex; still subtle, but they incorporate arches and more varied geometrical arrangements. Most of the work has an architectural flavor, they could be blueprints in taupe. Some are reminiscent of Greco Roman ruins – perhaps a coliseum or an ancient bridge, maybe a barren old water conduit in bone dry beige redolent of the eons parched by sun and time. They hold a meditative solemnity; there is an understated eloquence to the repetitive act of their improvisational creation that is ruminative like a visual mantra.



Drew Shiflett, Untitled #452, 2007, graphite, ink, watercolor and conte crayon on handmade paper, 57-1/2" x 83-1/4"

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