

“Work In Process,” essay by Kristen Frederickson PhD, for brochure for Work in Process show at Kristen Frederickson Contemporary Art, NYC, 2003

Work in Process

This exhibition celebrates the enormous variety and yet singular connections that emerge when artists concentrate on the theme of process. The three artists whose work appears here focus their attention on the effort of mark-making, the strength of layers and accumulation, and most importantly, the presence of the hand of the artist in the finished work.

Kelly Driscoll is intrigued by the individuality of an artist’s mark, and her prints and drawings reflect this concern. The extraordinary minuteness of her marks takes on a particular identity based on repetition, addition and the power of multiple treatments of a theme. The harmony of the lines in her drawings arises in part from the sheer multiplicity of them. The impression of precise perfection is actually contradictory; there are two disparate structures that have been imposed upon one another, one a strictly linear grid, and the other an organic, pulsating flow of marks. Driscoll is interested in the conflict between these qualities and the sense of struggle and veiled hierarchy present in the energetic surfaces. The paper itself seems to be engaged in a fruitless struggle to contain these marks.

Fran Siegel approaches her work with a similar interest in the conflicting pull of layers, each of which reflects a particular moment in the process of creating these pieces. The passage of time and the intention of the artist are undeniably present in the finished work, much of which is created by removing materials that have been used in the process. Siegel is inspired as well by the weightless and invisible power of light to transform the viewer’s experience. These fragile, precise surfaces nevertheless vibrate with movement and effervescent color, reflecting the interior dialogue between solid and void that is so much a part of Siegel’s intention.

Drew Shiflett shares with Driscoll and Siegel a fascination with accumulation and layering. Although both her sculpture and her drawings are created with astonishing precision, Shiflett actually revels in the imperfections that necessarily accompany any object created by human hands. The particular focus of these works is to find beauty and emotion in sheer cumulative effort, as well as in the choice of sympathetic materials and forms. The rather mundane materials used to create especially the sculpture (polyester stuffing, styrofoam, cheesecloth) are in complete contradiction to the precious nature of the finished work; the viewer is struck forcibly by the dedication of the artist, the attention to detail, and the patient devotion to process that lie within these pieces. The drawings seem to represent a mythical architectural space inhabited by tiny forms, all of which are invisible under the intense layering of the surfaces.

The work of these three artists represents an effort to marry an almost chaotic repetition with order and balance. As a result, the viewer is both stimulated by their multiplicity and materiality, and soothed by their calm focus.

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