

percolator magazine **summer 2007**



exhibit reviews:

Jill Sylvia: Ledger, Eleanor Harwood
Gallery
San Francisco, CA
by Tonya Warner

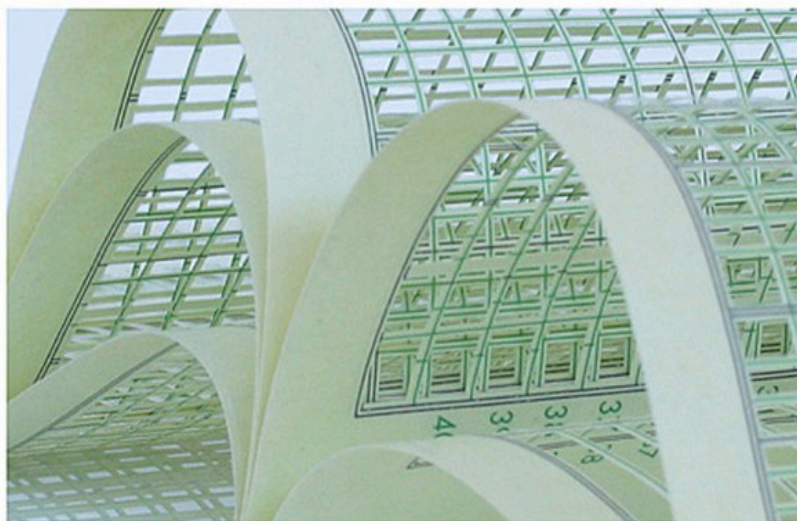
Colter Jacobsen: Light Falls, Jack
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Yiannis Kolefas, B&CM
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Comic Abstraction, MoMA
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Johanna Billing, Collective Gallery
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Jill Sylvia: Ledger
Eleanor Harwood Gallery
San Francisco, CA
19 May – 16 June 2007

by Tonya Warner

Drawing upon modern society's need – compulsion, if you will – to quantify, record, and order, Jill Sylvia's latest show, "Ledger" at Eleanor Harwood, uses ledger paper as its source material. The artist meticulously cut the boxes out from the paper's existing grid pattern, leaving behind a beautifully delicate paper screen, a sort of rigidly linear lacework. One of the most immediately noticeable aspects of Sylvia's work is the element of process – the amount of effort and concentration required to produce these pieces. One can almost picture her hunched over the sheets, looking for all intents and purposes like a pre-QuickBooks accountant. Only, she is subtracting rather than adding content to these pages. Sylvia, in fact, regulated the time she spent working on these pieces, bringing into play elements of duration and routine that seem fitting with their source material. In the press release, the artist states, "I involve myself in this routine of trying to make

time (and labor) palpable while communicating its loss.”

It is almost surprising how beautiful these pieces are, given the dry, calculated nature of their making, due, in part, to how well they are displayed. On one wall, 30 identical yellow ledger pages sit in a regular grid; comprising a series called “Untitled (Month),” these pages represent both a month’s worth of ledger pages and a month’s worth of labor. Rather than frame the sheets, Sylvia has chosen to have them float off the wall, held rigidly in place by long pins, effectively giving them more dimensional presence.

It is notable that not all of these were virgin ledgers – some retain the traces of notations in blue and red ink – shown most interestingly in her reconstruction pieces. The artist not only cut out the boxes, but painstakingly saved and recomposed the little pieces of paper into brick-like grids. In some of the reconstructions, such as “Untitled Reconstruction (Birds on Wire),” she reconfigures the traces of ink in ways so as to resemble a very pointillated scene of birds on a power line. Most of these such works involve what appear to be “utopian” cityscapes (which, incidentally always seem to involve high rises), reinforced by a sculpture where she has made 3-D buildings out of the grids of denuded paper. Sylvia’s work incorporates modern minimalist aesthetics with a more contemporary conceptual grounding that belies a certain thoughtfulness and care. She is definitely an artist to watch out for in the future.

http://www.eleanorharwood.com/Jill_Sylvia.html

Do you want to add your thoughts? Email us at percolatormag@gmail.com and we’ll put them below.