

THE WONDER OF RC WONDERLY'S 'LINE' AT MCQ FINE ART

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Line Through December 20; Monday, Wednesday & Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. MCQ Fine Art Advisory, 366-9339.

Forget what every art student has to master: perspective. Disappear the landscapes, the cozy domestic scenes, centuries of portraiture with buttoned-up bodies or bodies languorously unrobed. Chuck the realism completely. The only thing left in drawing is pure line, and it's used to strange and disarming effect in RC Wonderly's *Line* exhibition at MCQ Fine Art.

The 17 small-format works in the show owe far more to the 3D tradition of abstract sculpture than the 2D conventions of drawing. The high-contrast black and white forms have a mysterious gravity, as if the properties usually assigned to sculpture—volume, mass and weight—were enfolded on a flat plane. They exude a sensuous density and texture. Is that a seductive hint of steel blue? How deep does that matte black go?

Materials matter. To make these works, Wonderly applies thin strips of double-sided tape to transparent Dura-Lar sheets—a clear tape on a clear surface. Then he rubs, presses, pushes powdered graphite into the tape, adds more tape, repeats the process, brushes some mineral crumbs aside and leaves a gray smudge, the trace of a fingerprint.

Although the constraints of drawing with tape—fixed width and straight edges—would impose limitations in the hands of a less-accomplished artist, Wonderly reveals the apparently limitless potential of his materials. One of the striking things about *Line* is the variety of abstract compositions—

ladders, rectangles, grids, tracks. Some patterns recall parquet, others bookcases, still others circuit boards.

The spokes in Drawing 10, for example, reel the viewer in through contrast and shape, then concentrate the eye in the center of the wheel where the core is caught in a freeze-frame pileup. Drawing 2 has a completely different vibe, with a series of elongating lines advancing across the picture plane as if they were organic life forms reaching into space.

But the most striking thing about the exhibition is that Wonderly manipulates lines the way sculptor Marc di Suvero manipulates I-beams. They are “placed” in space. Instead of constructing a steel tower and siting it in a park, Wonderly builds one on Dura-Lar and puts it in a frame. In handling lines for their weight and dimension, rather than for contour, Wonderly’s drawings also recall the 2D work of Richard Serra. They share an attraction to heavy, dense blacks, but where Serra is in-your-face, Wonderly is lyrical, playful and intimate. All in all, it’s a wondrous show and not to be missed.