

MAY 07 **Review: Scott Wolniak/Valerie Carberry**
Gallery Drawings, Sculpture



“Current,” acrylic, ink, watercolor, chalk and graphite on plaster with wire mesh on plywood, 2014

RECOMMENDED

“Fields” is the title of Scott Wolniak’s exhibition at Valerie Carberry, but translation seems to be a linking theme between the two distinct bodies work on view. Lining the left wall of the gallery is a tableau of chunky, predominantly plaster works that the artist has scraped, cut and etched in occasionally revealing their burlap and wire armatures—a hint of how they bridge and translate elements of painting/bas relief/sculpture. Consist of very simple, usually one word titles, these works hint at natural themes, such as in “Falls” and “A Garden,” but appear as unrecognizable abstractions. The whorls, lines and grids cut into these works sgraffito-style delineate the areas of subdued colors and seems to create an internal vocabulary of shapes and line that the viewer is not privileged to understand. Coupled with their

emphatic tablet-ness, viewing these works feels somewhat akin to looking at ancient artifacts—the Sumerian cylinder seals held at the Oriental Institute come to mind along with the Rosetta Ston —though one feels a sense of doubt that within this abstraction there is in fact an actual, hidden language. And perhaps it’s more pleasant just to enjoy the abstraction rather than to try to parse it for a literal meaning.



“Grass,” graphite on paper, 2014

Accompanying these works is a series of graphite on paper drawings likewise abstract. Made up of thousands of tiny gestures that again seem to comprise a secret language, these works were produced (so the gallery literature tells you) through translating grayscale photographs, enlarged to the point of abstraction or near-abstraction, to paper. Out of the whole exhibition, the drawing “Grass” is the only work where I could distinguish the subject matter, and even then

only with the help of a title. I found the drawings to be the most enjoyable works on view, communicating technological obsolescence and a healthy bit of skepticism about technology. While the practice, production and understanding of photography has been upset by technological seismic shifts, all you need to draw is graphite and paper, fundamentally no different than what you needed centuries ago—likewise a Sumerian cylinder can still roll out its message on a bit of clay. (Abraham Ritchie)

Through May 31 at Valerie Carberry Gallery, 875 North Michigan.