

Three Kinds of Order: Intersections in Abstraction by Michael Anthony Garcia 2018
Rebecca Harrell, Alexandra Robinson, and Naomi Schlinke
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One would expect that a union of abstractions from different planes would lead to a building cacophony of dissonance, an ever crescendoing din of disparate, chaotic voices. Except, abstraction's chaos can materialize in a still breath that slowly encompasses everything around it, merging with other moments of hushed disorder. It can imperceptibly seep and merge seamlessly in our periphery, barely caught in the corner of our eye. Such is the melding that takes form with the work in this exhibition. The quiet cross-fade between the abstraction in the works of Alexandra Robinson, Rebecca Rothfus Harrell, and Naomi Schlinke, takes place in the spaces between heartbeats, in the pause. The work that they present in Three Kinds of Order uses their own dialects of abstraction, communicating different approaches, but from the same root language.

Alexandra Robinson's practice is varied yet the images presented in this exhibition speak to the perception of language and action. Ephemerality is re-contextualized to convert the micro to the macro. Patterns are used as tools of discovery, made to be evidence of action, as much as the act of painting or drawing itself is a record of a physicality or action by the artist. Robinson's found-drawings see the artist redefining banal stains from the real world into a cohesive translation, shifting from concrete into an abstraction of reality. The work presented here by Robinson is a reversed reflection of the human brain's natural tendency to convert the abstract to the tangible, as one might perceive terrible faces in the flames of a bonfire. The end result of the work is a portrait of isolated ephemera, zooming out without the natural tendency of our hardwired filters making sense to create order.

Exploring the other side of perception, Rebecca Rothfus Harrell examines the minutia as would a scientist, determined to discover a truth. Conversely, Rothfus Harrell's work also curiously searches with an eye of meditation, delving deeper and deeper within to discover the heart of a core. The approach is dual-minded. As a scientist might zoom down and map atomic characteristics and find identical systems to those of planets around it's nuclei of a star, a spiritual exploration delves into consciousness to connect an existence to larger planes of experience, finding parallels as well. In her body of work, Rothfus Harrell extrapolates similar connections, and whereas Robinson's work zoomed out from the micro to the macro, Rothfus Harrell travels in the other direction. Her examination of minerals dives into their characteristics of cleavage and structure, focusing in on details to find mountains and landscapes from which they themselves could have originated. The work creates both an abstraction and a context for details. It convinces viewers of its own order.

Naomi Schlinke's abstraction emotes through motion. Her work directly connects to her many years as a dancer, both in its contemplative nature as well as it's expressive intensity. Bone cannot be separated from muscle and experience while the work's other-worldliness ironically speaks from a seasoned experience. There is an exigency to the lines, colors and stokes that could have gone a different direction, but inexplicably felt the need to move as they did, finding their own order. While Robinson's and Rothfus Harrell's resulting works have definite beginnings and endpoints, in the work that Schlinke shares in Three Kinds of Order, discernible starts and stops seem irrelevant. Each piece started with an emptiness that dissipated as it progressed and grew, yet they did so without concern for reference points. Each one teases the line of illegibility as each eye that approaches the work has its own background knowledge from which it draws its conclusions, as different as each iris.

By the very nature of chaos, there should be no dots to connect. Its natural state is a violation of consensus and reason. Robinson's language of perception shouldn't speak to Rothfus Harrell's channeled gaze or Schlinke's suggested spaces. However, the micro to macro and back, the tug of order, and explorations of the physical and beyond, DO exist within the same plane, merely bleeding into one another quietly without regard for what the other is doing. Each artist negotiates the properties of detail's influence on a larger system in their own way. There is a permission in all the work to hover in the in-between, in the ether as the currents merge and flow into what they would have been otherwise.