

THE DRAWING CENTER

Joanna Kleinberg, Assistant Curator on J. Parker Valentine at Lisa Cooley Fine Art

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J. Parker Valentine (b. 1980) is one of a number of younger artists who use abstraction as a subject, widening its parameters to reflect personal narrative as well as diverse cultural and artistic legacies. Cultivating a practice that focuses on drawing, but which also includes film, photography, painting, and sculpture, Valentine's work often begins as a documentation or abstraction of experience which is then filtered through the artist's interest in mythology, media, and architecture.

In her second solo show at Lisa Cooley Fine Art on view through April 11th, Valentine presents a new series of gestural, abstract drawings on paper and MDF board in conjunction with a new sculptural installation wherein the sculpture-as-drawing and the drawings themselves become interchangeable. Sketchy graphite abstractions — executed on MDF panels that lean precariously against the gallery wall at varying degrees and supported solely by a bent nail — are suggestive of structural possibilities (and misgivings), and reveal the artist's interest in exploring architecture as both a psychological and physical space. Their rough surface and tenuous placement give a sense of disjunction not just between art and industry but between the rhetoric of male abstraction and the delicacy of the drawn line, with perhaps a hint of irony.

For the Brooklyn-based artist, these expressive drawings made with chunks of graphite, oil pastel, and colored pencil on both paper and MDF board allow for brilliant interplays between definitive graphite marks and wispy erasures; abstraction and figuration. Between the voids, tangible, concrete forms gradually emerge from enigmatic fragments of lines and erasures. Despite their subdued surfaces, Valentine's latest work maintains a similar sense of dynamism to her earlier work and a desire to cultivate playful, spatial abstractions. The artist continues to diversify the media that she works in; the material efficiency and detailing dictate the complex, visual push-and-pull that unfolds between surface, form, and line. To that effect, Valentine counters the drawn works by incorporating appropriated, silver gelatin prints from her personal archive that are framed and presented as amorphous 'vessels' bonded to clay, the hollow chambers function as literal and informational conduits.

Though seemingly dissimilar in form, the works on view are all closely related through their inherent drawn quality and fractured abstraction, straddling the boundary between two and three dimensional works of art. Poised between hard-edged architectonics with the free-flowing gestures of drawing and the shifting planes of collage, J. Parker Valentine poses the limits and possibilities of contemporary abstraction. —*Joanna Kleinberg, Assistant Curator*