

An Untaught Lesson in Line in Dodge

BY OLIVIA SHIH

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Malya Schulman for Columbia Daily Spectator

Jon Fasanelli-Cawelti, Richie Lasansky, and Brian Lynch—the three printmakers currently on display at the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies gallery—take lines very seriously. In the exhibition “Drawing Beneath the Surface: Contemporary Intaglio Prints,” lines jut across the frame, overflow into globules of ink, and depict the simplest scenes of mundane life in inky whirls reminiscent of jazz music. Although all three printmakers have distinct styles and tackle different subjects, their personalities refrain from clashing in the exhibition, and each framed artwork adds to the strength of its neighbor.

From Lasansky’s *Marabou* to Lynch’s *Subway Rider*, the works immediately immerse the viewer into a world of lines twisting and running across the walls to their own silent music. Each artwork clings to its own personal belief, claiming more right to exist than actual people and things. I had never imagined that drawing-based Intaglio prints could ever achieve so much.

As Lasansky said in an interview, Intaglio printmaking is “such a sensual, tactile medium, and if you don’t get your hands dirty and experience the feel of drawing on copper and printing the plate, you’ll never really know what the medium can do.” In fact, according to Lasansky, all three printmakers make their ink from scratch. This personal investment in printmaking is evident in their artwork, giving a throbbing pulse to the inky lines and globules.

In Lynch's *Arrest*, the artist addresses a line of criminals, shackled and standing in a row with their backs to a uniformed officer. Although Lynch utilizes the fewest of marks of the three printmakers, each line is pregnant with feeling. Even the curves of a criminal's baggy pants are clearly depicted, as well as the blend of shame and flaming indignation of the shackled men.

Fasanelli-Cawelti, on the other hand, eschews concrete scenes and people, delving instead into the abstract realm with an abundance of mark-making and ink washes. In *Jazz Is the River Burning*, Fasanelli-Cawelti gives way to the signature lines of printmaking and engraving, hard and fast and black. Then, without warning, he breaks these lines and geometric patterns with a sudden curve of irregularity. The artist takes a step further in *S.P. Soprano Brass*—the texture of music takes form in cycling windmills of ink and the winding curves of snails and tentacles.

Lasansky brings printmaking to a subtler, quieter dimension in *Charlie*, a depiction of a girl with tied-up hair. The addition of an orange-beige color brings out the bounce of a lock of hair and the softness of an exposed earlobe. On closer inspection, one can even see the tiny lines, striped like a tabby cat, adding a certain depth to the background and a roughness to Charlie's cheek.

In the modest LeRoy Neiman Center gallery, emphasis isn't placed on the grandeur of the location or the spaciousness of the walls, but on a quiet agreement among the artworks. The exhibition forces you to ask the question: When was the last time you thought about a line?

"Drawing Beneath the Surface: Contemporary Intaglio Prints" is showing at the LeRoy Neiman Gallery for Print Studies in 310 Dodge Hall. The exhibition closes on Oct. 21.