

GEORGE BOURRET

Sol LeWitt's "Wall Drawing #118: Fifty randomly placed points all connected by straight lines," redone at the Museum School.

The art of performance

'Something Along Those Lines' exhibit emphasizes process over form

By Cate McQuaid
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Back in 1971, Sol LeWitt visited the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and invited students to

GALLERIES

help him construct a wall drawing. LeWitt had been creating large-scale wall works for only three years, taking a startling new approach to murals. The art began with instructions. Line and form were no longer paramount; the idea behind them was just as valuable. Concept, process, and product held equal sway. Then, the product was often literally erased when the show ended.

"Wall Drawing #118: Fifty randomly placed points all connected by straight lines" has now

been redrawn by Jesse Good, lead draftsman for the LeWitt estate, and several Museum School students in the school's Barbara and Steven Grossman Gallery. It's a dense pencil map of nexuses, each radiating out to the others, and the centerpiece of "Something Along Those Lines," a taut exhibit of work that blends idea, performance, and form.

The show, curated by Evan J. Garza, the school's exhibitions and public programs coordinator, casts back to "Changing Terms," the 1971 exhibition that incorporated "Wall Drawing #118." Works by two other artists in that show, Lawrence Weiner and Fred Sandback, are included in this one. Weiner, an-

other father of conceptual art, takes text as his bailiwick, posing riddles about art in words emblazoned on the wall. Sandback's spare piece, in which lines are drawn through the air and on wall and floor with single strands of yarn, is masterful at evoking form and nothingness in one stroke.

An early Bruce Nauman film (on video here), "Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square," rounds out the show's foundation. Like LeWitt's wall drawing, and every work here, Nauman's film springs from that essential gesture, the line. How animate can a line be? What is its impact? A more contemporary video, "Four Parallel Lines" by the duo Ann

Carlson + Mary Ellen Strom, features four Guatemalan day laborers using planks to draw lines in the sand that are then washed away by the tide. The disappearing line becomes a metaphor for work done by undocumented immigrants.

In many of these pieces, art is as much a happening as an object. Felix Gonzalez-Torres made installations that could be taken apart by viewers, bit by bit — such as his untitled piece here from 1990, featuring three stair-stepping stacks of paper, each with a blue line streaked down the middle. Viewers are encouraged to take a sheet home. Knowing that the artist died of AIDS-related illness in 1996 at 38, it's impossible not to draw

parallels between the fleeting quality of his work and of his life.

The line isn't always a metaphor. Carlos Cruz-Diez funnels color through slatted lines in his 3-D painting "Physichromie 2385," and Gertrude Goldschmidt, known as Gego, like Sandback, simply draws them in space in her writhing iron mesh sculpture "Untitled (Bicho)."

LeWitt's "Drawing #118," with its junctures and rays, could map trajectories of strands of art over the last 40 or 50 years — conceptual, gestural, performative. Just as this exhibit does.

Blank's look at memory

Gil Blank's exhibit at LaMontagne Gallery also blends object and happening, delving into the slippery nature of memory. Starting with images from a webcam overlooking the waterfront in Portland, Maine, Blank reproduces them again and again. This show features the first stage, with the pictures laser-engraved onto graphite slabs, and a later stage, for which the graphite images were scanned to what's called a fugitive inkjet print. Fugitive means the print will degrade over time.

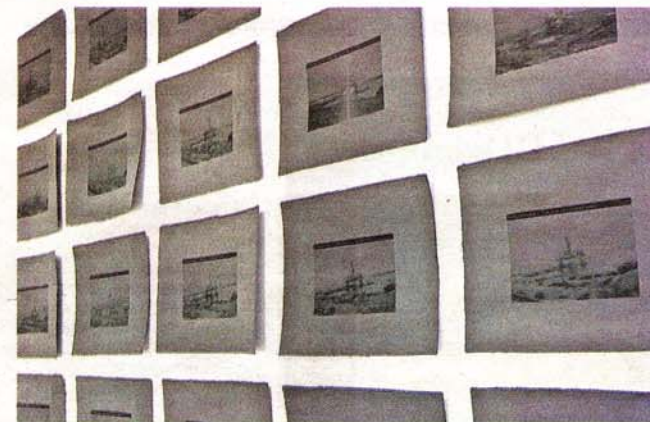
Everything here seems fugitive. The black-on-black images

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SOMETHING ALONG THOSE LINES
At: Barbara and Steven Grossman Gallery, School of the Museum of Fine Arts, 230 The Fenway, through Nov. 3. 617-369-3718, www.smfa.edu/lines

GIL BLANK
At: LaMontagne Gallery, 555 East Second St., South Boston, through Oct. 24. 617-464-4640, www.lamontagnegallery.com

ELSEWHERE
At: Distillery Gallery, 516 East Second St., South Boston, through Oct. 26. www.gallery.distilleryboston.com



Gil Blank's webcam images of the Portland, Maine, waterfront are laser-engraved onto graphite slabs and eventually become inkjet prints.

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on the graphite blocks are best perceived from the side, depending on how the light hits them. Each requires time and delicate investigation. It's thrilling to have a work that feels hidden yield clues, little by little.

Surprisingly, the graphite scans well. The prints are easier to read, with more contrast, although often smudgy, already fading. Ultimately, Blank's project skewers ideas of permanence and of the reality we often cling to. But it also makes visceral the sense of possibility in all we cannot see.

The wonder of it all

Liz Devlin, who heads up the local art digest FLUX.Boston, applies a generous vision to "Elsewhere," a party of a show at the Distillery Gallery. There's no central theme, other than that the work should

evoke wonder. Much of it does. Nathan Fried Lipski has constructed charming, funny birdhouses and cabinets from found wood. The collaborative INDIVIDUALS took a similar approach to "L'artiste," a scrap-wood sculpture of an elephant in a wheelchair admiring drawings of elephant exploits.

Veteran artist Scott Listfield contributes a handful of comically poignant paintings in which an astronaut is a stand-in for an outsider looking upon the ravages human society has wrought. Molly Segal, still in the master's program at the Museum School, is powerfully skilled with watercolors, using the medium to convey movement and emotion, as in "The Wrestlers." There's no deep concept to "Elsewhere," but the art is both accessible and smart.

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"L'artiste," by the collaborative INDIVIDUALS, is a scrap-wood sculpture of an elephant in a wheelchair admiring drawings of elephant exploits.