

**MICHAEL YOUNG at Holly Johnson Gallery**

by Todd Camplin, August 18, 2017

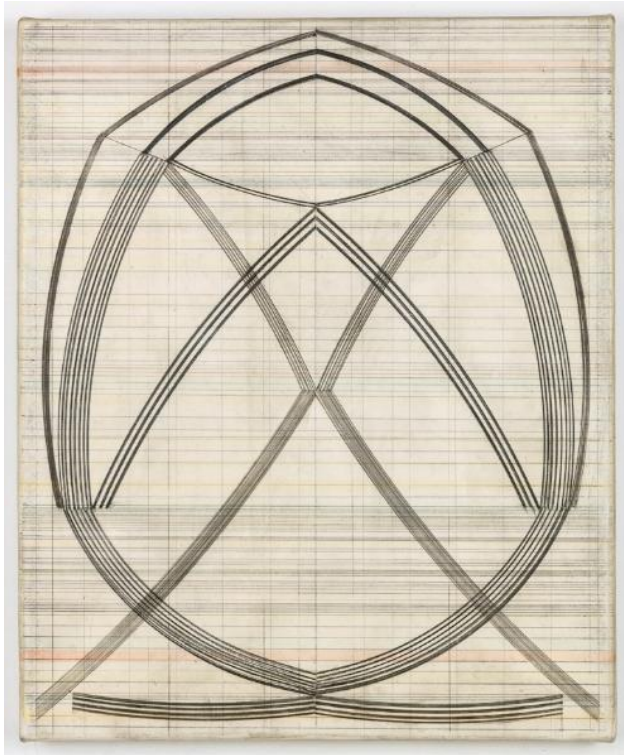


Geometers Condition I, 2016-17, Graphite and Acrylic on Panel, 48 x 42 inches

Something as simple as a line can create a range of emotional suggestions. Next, to the point, the line is the simplest expression in making visual art. Essential and at the core of nearly every work of art throughout the ages, the line helps direct our eyes through an art piece, whether implied or actual. Thick marks can give a feeling of boldness, while a thin wavy line can draw out from the viewer a feeling of nervousness and being unsure. The power of this art element can feel spiritual as well and structurally material.

Michael Young's drawings at Holly Johnson Gallery are like a poetic ode to the Line. When approaching these works you first notice the strong, thick graphite. As you walk closer you begin to make out the thin subtle grid in the background.

The thick lines combine to create a feeling of something tangible, but yet out of reach. He describes it as the invisible having presence. I believe we are in the presence of his diverse interests... A kind of Platonic form of his thoughts. He lists architecture, pollen, desert landscapes, Mimbres pottery, tantric art, seismographs, petroglyphs, and textiles to name a few. Young's process of moving the lines across his image and weaving them over each other is influenced by his fascination with textiles. The process, the shapes made in the fabrics, and the individual lines that make up the whole has Young transfixed. His drawing is kin to the rhythm of breathing, marking time, or a musical meter. Young told me about his experience hearing the Anonymous 4 singing a cappella medieval music. The sounds of their voices seemed to reverberate in the church and helped to emphasize the architecture. Like a chant or rhythmic poem, Young's lines also seem to reverberate, giving a constant energy that moves up and down his surfaces.



Updraft XI, 2016-17, Graphite and Acrylic on Panel, 16 x 12 3/4 inches



Updraft XVI, 2016-17, Graphite and Acrylic on Panel, 16 x 12 3/4 inches

I found it interesting that Young seals in the grids in order to preserve them from his more invasive process of creating those thicker graphite lines. There was a lot of erasing, slow creation of his graphite marks. The compositions were not set, but rather part of a process changing and redrawing. Much like a textile artist might have to strip out a thread, Young edited and changed his drawings to create a feeling of vibration and invisible presence he was trying to achieve.

Young has had a long history of showing paintings. For nearly 40 years, he has been a painter. 25 of those years were spent living and working in New York City. I was interested to see his early geometric paintings. These works sought the essence of shapes. In contrast, these new works are about the line and are essentially drawings rather than paintings. I think these new works have a spiritual, yet material beauty. Unknowable, but felt images, visually understood as being something crafted and labored over.

Michael Young now lives and works in Austin, Texas. His current show at Holly Johnson Gallery will be up through October 7th. Full disclosure, I show art with the gallery too.