

INTERVIEW NOV 21 - WRITTEN BY XUEZHU JENNY WANG

Marjorie Van Cura's Lines of Resistance



Artist Marjorie Van Cura reckons with forces larger than life—from dizzying landscapes to construction sites, from natural disasters to collective action. At [DFN Projects](#), her solo exhibition *Out of Line*, presented by [Garvey|Simon](#), unveils an electrifying body of work inspired by images of protest. The exhibition's title, a forward and witty wordplay referencing both the artist's process and thematics, heralds a timely sensibility that centers on collective defiance and public love. Rendered through the blind contour technique, Van Cura's drawings on translucent film capture crowds, architectural structures, and vehicles in overlapping net-like configurations. Slogans such as "Bans Off Our Bodies" emerge from an impassioned array of lines, brimming with rapidity and entropy.

Van Cura references news photography to create these tension-filled pieces. However, instead of merely transcribing these protest photos into drawings, she permutes and enlivens them, turning urban and political landscapes that are otherwise bleak into relics ablaze with radical care. Recognizable landmarks such as the US Supreme Court or the Capitol ground these events in specific locations, yet the social causes that motivate the demonstrations are connected via a universally shared sense of urgency, discontent, and perhaps optimism.

Xuezhu Jenny Wang: Could you elaborate on what "blind contour" entails, what the process looks like, and how you decided to use this technique to represent themes of protest?

Marjorie Van Cura: Blind contour is a technique where one observes a scene in front of them and describes it using line—sometimes just one continuous line—without looking at the drawing that results. This technique is employed by artists to draw from a set vantage point, so that they can better describe the edges of forms and where each form folds or turns in space. The "blind" part of the process inherently distorts and creates unexpected relationships and intersections of lines in the final image.

I enjoy the spontaneous quality of these drawings and how they still retain specific elements of the original photograph I am referencing. I have been using this technique in my work for many years, and it is not exclusively related to the subject of my *Protest Series*.



XJW: Your *Protest Series* started in 2021, and a lot has happened since then. What do protests mean to you? Are you looking at protests confronting issues within the US or around the world?

MVC: When people take the time to organize, attend, and participate in a protest, they are invested emotionally in a cause or issue. They have taken time out of their day or evening to lend their voice and attempt to make an actual difference. This, to me, is the highest expression of a democracy. Even if I don't personally agree with their opinion, I admire and respect their action. The issues I find most compelling are when there seems to be a critical mass of people focusing on a cause that captures a worldwide audience. These can be a true catalyst for change.

XJW: Your website also mentions that a lot of your work is inspired by aerial news photography. Journalism is often referred to as the “first draft of history.” Reproducing these images through artistic mediation seems to imbue them with a sense of latency but also universality. How does your work complicate these images and their significance

MVC: Yes, to report the news is to report on recent history, although we often don't yet know the significance of each story. An aerial view of a newsworthy event provides a way to understand it beyond our human scale. AP News' photography of large groups of people protesting can often be dramatic, shocking, and sometimes violent. There is also a general sense of impending conflict, which is unnerving. If a photo affects me, I will reference it in my work, and that emotion does translate. The blind contour, electric color, and layered tracings abstract my images, although the representational elements are still embedded. I enjoy exploring this duality in my work.



XJW: After the election and leading up to the new presidency, how are you feeling? Has your work changed, or are there changes that you envision happening in your work? How do we, as a society, move forward?

MVC: It is difficult to describe my post-election state of mind. My feelings are complex and not yet fully verbalized. It will take time to fully process, of course, and to better know how politics and social issues may influence my future work in the studio. What I do try to trust is the natural evolution of processes and concepts in my artistic practice. There has been more and more complexity to my work over the past few years, which may be related to the greater and greater uncertainty and influx of information that is out there in the zeitgeist. I believe that Truth matters, and somehow it will lead us to finding the right path. Democracy is messy, but I believe in it, I do.

XJW: What feelings or actions do you hope to inspire through *Out of Line*?

MVC: Pay attention, educate yourself, and participate!

Marjorie Van Cura: *Out of Line* is on view from November 6 to December 6, 2024, at DFN Projects (16 East 79th Street, Garden Level), New York.

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