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# Andrea Way & Adam Fowler @ Brian Gross

MARCH 19, 2018

by **Julia Couzens**

**"A Delicate Crossing," 2016, ink and acrylic on paper,  
30 x 22 inches**

The radiant, optically charged works on and of paper by Andrea Way and Adam Fowler are mesmerizing spectacles of precision and gesture that breathe fresh life into the imperiled states of wonder and awe. The exhibition is an inspired pairing of artists whose multilayered works are, respectively, the result of painstaking, accumulated mark-making (Way) and surgical excision (Fowler). From neural pathways to terrestrial geography, line is the thread that links their investigations.



*A Delicate Crossing*, Way's fifth solo exhibition at the gallery, continues her exploration of intricate rule-based drawing using ink, acrylic and infinitesimal glass beads to create cosmic evocations both grand and minute. Her creative process has long been based on self-imposed systems and the mechanics of codes. She was first recognized for grid-based work, but since 2014 her drawings have shifted to a reliance on empirical observation of organic patterns in nature, Northern California beaches and the marine flotsam veiling Chesapeake Bay in particular. While her work is resolutely abstract, she ekes out detail through the accretion of small, individual strokes and blots, lending the work a scientific aspect, a reification of things not visible to the naked eye.

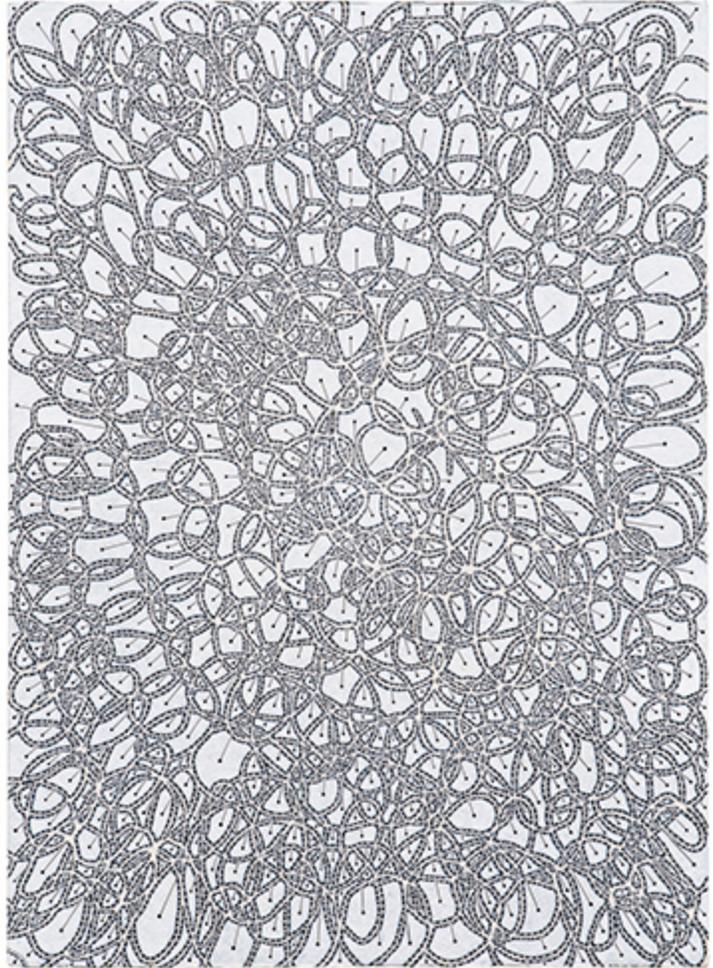
The limber spools of negative space in *A Delicate Crossing* imply both an astral dimension, akin to, say, Nazca lines or airline route maps, and a terrestrial component resembling seaweed trails left by a receding tide. The artist's scale and point of view appear to toggle back and forth between eclipsing vastness and bogglingly minute. In *Heart Strings*, pirouetting loops suggest

microfibers pinned into a lace-like linear fugue, or dirt bike trails viewed from space. Miniscule daubs of paint delineating line, along with tiny glass beads delicately sprinkled into circumscribed eddies, embroider the surface with a subtle, almost imperceptible texture.

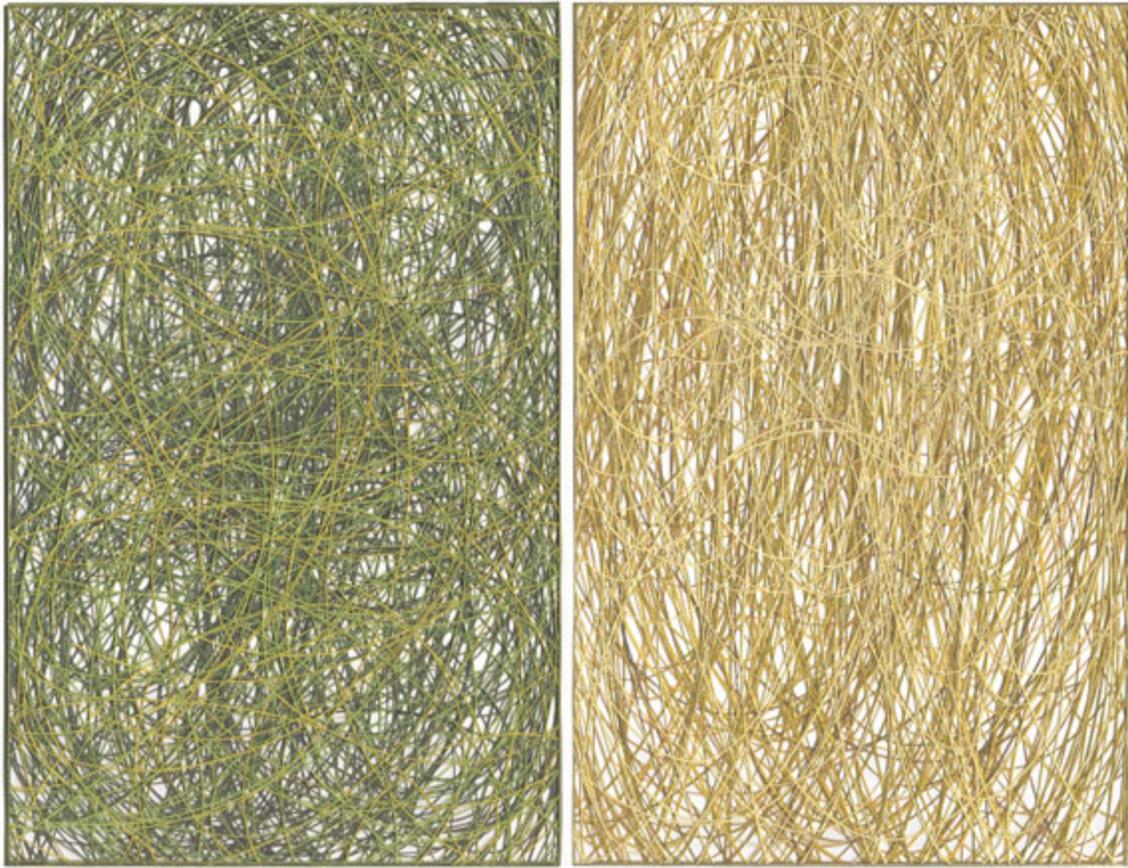
It's not possible to look at either Way or Fowler's work without thinking of the passage of time and of the performative nature of the works' creation. Like Bruce Conner, the great and arguably unparalleled obsessive, Way and Fowler distill repetitive gestures into meditative practices forged by what appears to

be sheer will. The acute meticulousness with which they deploy their materials and methods, however, does not filter out random acts of chance.

Fowler's *Spectral Resolution* is a spidery and seductive suite of small cut-paper constructions. Like Way, Fowler works within a system. He begins each work with an aggressive linear gesture, drawing with graphite on multiple sheets of paper tinted in earth tones. The degree of pressure and the width of his line, which alternates between thick and thin, sooty and barely visible, appear to be predicated on bodily impulses. Once the skeins are drawn, Fowler cuts away the negative space leaving doily-like scrimms of paper line. He then layers like-hued structures into stacks to create dense mats.



**Andrea Way: "Heart Strings," 2017, ink, acrylic, and glass beads on paper, 30 x 22 inches**



Adam Fowler: *Spectral Resolution # 5* and *# 3*, 2017, graphite and ink on paper, 14 x 9" ea.

*Spectral Resolution # 4* evokes piles of yellow thread pooling on a textile factory floor. The swirling linear thickets of *Spectral Resolution # 11* hint at subatomic particles or neurological synapses. For all of Fowler's assiduous specificity in fabrication, the work is abidingly ambiguous. Entities, ideas, conditions, and fragments of phenomena seem to move across the surface or emerge from the clotted depths, animated by a glimpse. But the work's crisp, blade-sharp clarity only amplifies its mystery. Like Way's stop-start accumulations, Fowler's constructions possess the grandeur of pulsating universes. We are both lost in and caught by his field of vision, and in a moment of self-forgetting stand only in wonder.

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Andrea Way: "A Delicate Crossing" and Adam Fowler: "Spectral Resolution" @ [Brian Gross Fine Art](#) through April 28, 2018. **Artist talk** on rule-based drawing, Saturday, April 7th, 2pm.

**About the Author:**

Julia Couzens is a Sacramento-based artist and writer whose work has been widely shown, most recently at the di Rosa Preserve. Her drawings and hybrid objects are in museum and public collections throughout the U.S. These include the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts; Berkeley Art Museum; Oakland Museum; Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina; and Yale University. She lives and works on Merritt Island in the Sacramento River delta.

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