



## “QUIET DOWN THERE!”

Which is what Mickey *In the Night Kitchen* shouts to the bakers below. To which **Louise Kohrman** comments, “I just can’t imagine being loud,” or shouting: in her art she seeks quiet, but simply, peacefully, through introspection. Trained as a printmaker, she first (literally) meditates on the copper plate, then on her delicate drawing, then on the repetitive printing process, then on making hundreds of cut-out circles from the prints, then on manipulating the hand cut circles into concave pod forms, then on arranging the tiny cones in an ever expanding but ultimately contained and again concave circle on a wall, the entire process honing and quieting her mind. She says she has lots of boxes of cut-out circles stored up, a sure sign of a Zen hoarder, hyper-organized, detailed and obsessive all her life.

At an earlier time she thought that line was inherently graphic and abrasive, loud, but in her recent prints she’s discovered a way to make lines quietly, softly. Where should the lines or forms stop?—it’s always a question—she wants to evoke a sense of infinite expansion or extension at the same time that the forms seem drawn up, back or in, to a mandala-like nest or core, the string, the line is complete. She talks about her work as containing specimens—specimens that mark time?—almost scientific as they become encased in plexiglass boxes. And then there is her endless pursuit of perfection. She knows she won’t ever be able to draw the elusive perfect circle, but she, like many artists before her, is still striving to do it.

Where is the physical body in her work? Well, her hands cramp up after cutting those numerous circles out of the strong, luminescent Japanese gampi paper. More to the point, she says “the work is me—I embody it just as it embodies me—I feel it. Awareness is what I want, self-awareness.” This leads, on the one hand, to some sense of a spirit body, a heart center or third eye, but there is also here the suspicion of an undercurrent of sexuality (as in “*The Presence of Absence*” series—what sort of intimate clotheslines are these?). She doesn’t consciously think about an audience as she works. The best you can do in life, she feels, is to be a model.

Earnest and reclusive, **Victoria Burge** also bravely aims for quiet in her art, but from a different conceptual perspective: when it’s quiet, there’s space for both artist and viewer to digest and inquire at once, to learn new ways of seeing the world, of experiencing inevitable change. For two years she studied flickering light reflections on water, photographing them, carefully drawing on paper over the photos, having the circles of light removed from the drawn paper by laser beams which is why the absent areas have a tiny brown edge, something both mysterious and articulate, positive becoming negative, and vice versa. She did the same thing with plexiglass sheets which, when subtly inked, she discovered could be pressed onto dense moist paper and leave bulges where the laser-driven holes once were. And then the plexiglass “holes” became suspended in hand-blown flasks, thus, in yet another almost alchemical transformation, making the flasks in her view the receptacle of the light of many rivers, reflections on reflections on reflections. And the original laser-cut papers suspended in front of each other can evoke the notion of a print made from light, ever-changing, sparkling light, illuminating and blinding at once.

The object here is to go out and bring the world of the senses back to the viewer in a way that defies precise definition. “To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees,” the French poet Paul Valery wrote, and one of her favorite artists, Robert Irwin, would concur. If you take away the immediate context of what you are seeing, you must create your own reaction, and why not make of it a re-imagined new science of specimens? It is not necessary, she feels, to know the story behind the light reflection works, viewers can just as well make up their own narrative linking this artistic family. All of her independent drawings are done on top of old maps and book pages, again selectively re-presenting supposedly scientific, celestial/terrestrial, information from the past. There can be a slippage between layers of this data, as in a drawing titled “*Orbit I*,” where the original map is transformed into a benign “death star,” teeming with minute, irregular life, which in turn seems to drift off the page, like the changing phases of the moon.

Both artists might be said to exemplify another artistic trope, in this case, what has sometimes been a drug-induced fascination with “the line of beauty.” While the definition of form may be imperfect or transient, the artists’ struggle with the concept of beauty is profound. Visually rewarding, exquisite in its detail, beauty in their work for these artists remains largely in the eye of the beholder.