



Zero to One on Paper, July 2 – August 21, 2015, Installation view: Ratio 3, San Francisco, Courtesy the artist(s) and Ratio 3, San Francisco.

Printmaking, Abstraction: “Zero to One on Paper” at Ratio 3

07-17-15

There’s a piece of public art installed in the Mission Bay neighborhood of San Francisco that is quintessential Richard Serra. Two 80-ton steel slabs emerge from ground at a slight angle, tilting vertically as they extend 50 feet into the air. Like other works by Serra these are experiential sculptures, un-monuments meant to affect the way we perceive the space around them. That work is titled “Ballast,” referencing the performative heft of the piece as it serves as a kind of anchor in a transitive cityscape. Serra’s etchings at “Zero to One on Paper,” on view at Ratio 3 through August 21, share the same name, though in this case the titles are “Ballast II” and “Ballast III”. Like his public sculpture at Mission Bay the works at Ratio 3 are monolithic and textural, anchor-like in the expansive gallery space that also has works by a host of painters and other artists making editioned work on paper.

As if to make the point that Serra’s monochromatic etchings serve as an actual ballast in the exhibition, his pieces are hung like reference markers within the grid of Daniel Buren’s “Framed/Exploded/Defaced.” You’ll be hard pressed to imagine that the works weren’t supposed to be installed together like this. Buren’s gridded installation of 25 framed pieces derived from a single aquatint is meant to fully cover whichever wall

it’s hung from, save for any windows or doorways. So the work softly navigates around Serra’s etchings as it would navigate around a dark window, albeit one that looks inward.

And speaking of etchings, Richard Tuttle’s series titled “Purple” is entirely composed of the color green. They’re seven works in varying tones along a color gradient, all muted greens except for one that teeters on the yellow precipice. Each is titled as if suggesting a kind of action -- “Green No. 4 (joining)” or “Green No. 5 (not dropping).” It’s easy to think of Serra’s famous list of action verbs, so here again Serra serves as a reference point of sorts.

Other artists included in this large group show are Alyson Shotz, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Louisiana Bendolph, Martin Puryear, Mary Heilman, Paul Mogensen, Richard Serra, Sol Lewitt, Spencer Finch, Tauba Auerbach, and Tomma Abts.

– Matt Smith Chavez, San Francisco Contributor