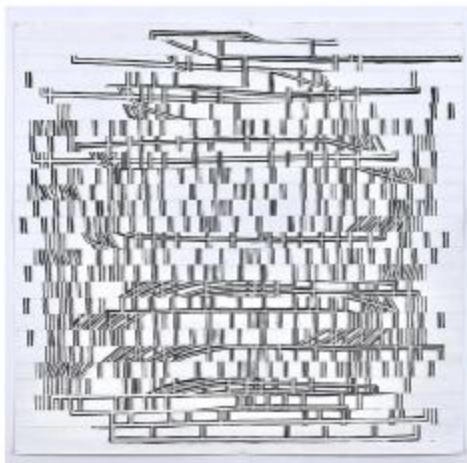


Travelling Lines at Smudajescheck Gallery: Carin Riley and Frauke Schlitz



In *"The Consolation of Philosophy"*, the philosopher Boethius has a discussion with the personification of Philosophy, much in the same way that Frauke Schlitz dialogues with Carin Riley in *"Travelling Lines"*. Boethius is imprisoned awaiting eventual trial, and execution, it is unsurprising that his questions revolve around the unanswerable: in short the notion of chaos and order coexisting. The two artists in *"Travelling Lines"* also choose to address the inherent contradictions in one of the most basic elements of image making: the line. How can line be both periodic and continuous and how can it appear to resemble objects and then dissolve into pure abstraction? In the hands of these two artists, the same visual tool generates undulating sinuous form and rigorous geometries and grids. Philosophy explains to Boethius that God can be both random and calculating and line is the same. *"Travelling Lines"* offers a call and response between the two artists; and while they may not resolve their questions to the satisfaction that allowed Boethius to calmly face his end, they do cover a wide swath of territory in aligning two seemingly contradictory attributes of the same force.

Schlitz' acrylic on paper collaged works vibrate with the energy of careful algorithmic repetition. Like a scientist or mathematician, she first generates a simple module which is then enlarged, shrunk, sliced, repositioned and/or shifted based on the encompassing bracket of the paper: her method of composition is movement. *"In Alexander Series I"* (2020) and *"Maze III"* (2020) Schlitz presents a pair of tightly crafted quasi-architectural propositions: the forms repeat, as in *"Alexander Series I"*, or appear to vibrate, in *"Maze III"*. But in *"Maze I"* (2020) and *"Maze II"* (2020) the rules begin to subvert themselves and the interference pattern of the fragmented work, instead of offering a pattern, begins to disintegrate. It's the same as we watch the philosopher Boethius oscillate between trusting in the world of appearances and despair at the seeming lack of consistency in how the world works. *"Beyond"* (2019) is a large clay-colored pastel and acrylic on paper which offers up a precise rendering of a three-dimensional arch form that either expands, or is projected, from the top of the page to the bottom (or vice versa). Schlitz' precise line of questioning reaches its apotheosis when the shimmering and quivering angles leave the page and inhabit the center of the gallery in the form of her paper and wood three-dimensional work *"Gestell"* (2020), a collection of motley rectangles rotating around a central axis, creeping along the floor, like a series of salt crystals growing on a string as the saline solution evaporates—natural law perhaps answers all our questions.

Riley plays the part of the personification of Philosophy, who in the book often provides absolute answers based to a large degree on faith and intuition. Her forms in this series, called *"Smoke Gold and Green"*, are based on imagery associated with the goddess Athena, so while Schlitz situates herself classically in terms of her Socratic line of questioning, Riley instead positions herself in the realm of classical Greek myth and symbol. Athena is the Goddess of weavers as well as warriors, and each of the four watercolors follow a loose four-square construction—but this geometricity is deceptive, the underlying form is also that of Athena's famous breastplate, the Aegis. With each iteration the artist's woven and knotted forms become increasingly complex. The airy *"Hematis and Gold"* (2021) is a composition predominantly of thickly outlined and rounded quadrilaterals in black, interlaced with thinner green and gold lines. Riley injects increasing complication by weaving more thin and colored strands, in *"Ivory and Gold"* (2021), gently nudging the overall effect from solid squares and angles to rounded lighter forms. *"Smoke and Gold"* (2021) again plays with presence by solidifying the strands. Like Philosophy in Boethius' *"Consolation"*, the fourth Athena painting *"Veridian and Gold"* (2021), decides to persuade us by overwhelming our senses, not with precise arguments but instead with multitudes implying infinite intersections of meaning. *"Veridian and Gold"* is all knots and very little space: the black, green, and gold lines are all on par now as the tightly outlined breastplate form appears to press the lines in on themselves.

Both Schlitz and Riley work up to a fever pitch of closely managed chaos, which fittingly corresponds to Boethius' fifth and last chapter, where Philosophy grants the philosopher the metaphorical keys to the kingdom, and his salvation, through the notion that time itself is simultaneously immediate and eternal. The writhing glittering knots of Riley's watercolors and Schlitz' disjointed shifting grids could not illustrate this notion better.