

An abstract drawing on a dark red, textured background. The drawing is centered and consists of dark, smudged lines and shapes, possibly representing a face or a figure. The overall tone is somber and mysterious.

A Loss of Logic: Abstract Drawings Reviewed

(<http://underculture.co.uk/2014/03/a-loss->

Monica Karpinski finds distraction in abstraction.

Abstract art can be a hard pill to swallow. Inexplicable planes of line and colour form constellations according to a logic in operation somewhere beyond you, and as you scour their bounds you can't help but feel a little jaded you're left out. With abstract art, the trick is to persevere.

The Drawing Room's *Abstract Drawings* is not for the irresolute. Hosting a collection of abstract drawings across a spectrum of big names, mediums and styles, *Abstract Drawings* forces us onto a critical plane that is at once both scary and exhilarating. There is no lead-in or explanation of the sovereign abstract worlds we see: we're thrown right into the deep end, scouring picture planes in the hope of gleaning some kind of clue as to what they're trying to tell us.

Abstract art addresses the meaning-making process at its most atomic point: when we simply feel, before we're able to identify what we're feeling via words. Meshes of forms, colours, textures and mediums interact in a way removed from all logic we know. We feel something, but we aren't sure why or what it is.

As we enter the space we're first confronted with Emma McNally's *Field 12*, a large carbon and graphite mural that at first glance appears as a kind of scientific drawing of a galaxy. From our space at the door, we see clouds of carbon black and the graphite outline of three larger circles, forms we would be forgiven for considering planets. We're drawn to the deep, rich darkness of her carbon vortex, and once closer discover hundreds of smaller schools of intersecting lines and tiny circles. The plane suddenly takes on whole new degrees of complexity, and as we try to trace the trajectory of its components realise we really know nothing at all about what it represents. We're completely at the mercy of its alien logic, left with nothing to consider except our automatic reactions to its visuality. Enabling us to experience and critically consider these reactions is the unique triumph of abstract art.

But it's not just works that are visually complex that ensnare us. A collection of minimal sketches by Eva Hesse and Sol LeWitt need only the raw power of line to command our attention. We diligently scan LeWitt's geometric clusters and follow contours of Hesse's lines, searching for a trace of the invisible force they're subjected to. Why do LeWitt's lines sit the way they do? Do they form a larger constellation, or are they separate entities in space next that happen to be next to each other? Why do the yellow lines make us anxious, and the black lines make us calm?

It is to this point of impossible questioning that abstract art seeks to take us. Really, you're just meant to feel: every line, colour and shape has a meaning, and elicits some kind of response from you. That very snap reaction before our brains can rationalise it via what we know is what abstraction seeks to isolate.

When you see a dark, brilliant blue, you feel something. When you see two lines intersect a certain way, you feel something that's different as to if they were in another formation. Abstract art deals with visual language in its most atomic elements, and refuse to negotiate with us on any other level.

Abstract Drawings is a thorough, self-assured and incredibly arresting exhibition that systematically challenges ways we process visual variables. We're forced to consider what we're seeing exactly as we see it, and so have no choice but to succumb to the interior authority of the picture plane. The longer we stare, the further we travel from the reality of the world around us: works cease to be works we

know exist on the walls of a gallery but become prompts, portals that expose us to otherworldly truths of base human instinct. We can't help what we feel, and now free from the logic of the represented world, we can focus on it in new and inspiring ways.