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## [Formal Function: Strategies of Abstraction Through June 11, 2016 at The Carnegie \(http://aeqai.com/main/2016/05/formal-function-strategies-of-abstraction-through-june-11-2016-at-the-carnegie/\)](http://aeqai.com/main/2016/05/formal-function-strategies-of-abstraction-through-june-11-2016-at-the-carnegie/)

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Don't let the title frighten you. This is quite simply one of the best abstract shows I've seen in years. A wide variety of what passes for abstraction today may open up a world of techniques and formats. Abstraction has run the gamut of possible definitions in the past century, and seems far from running out of changes and experiments. There are enough familiar names on the walls to keep visitors comfortable, making more than enough new moves to hold attention.



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The Nature of Things #10, 2016, oil and spray paint on canvas, 64" x 58"

Firstly , kudos to Curator Matt Distel, for both the selection and the excellent hanging.

The kind of work seen here needs breathing space to truly shine. Huge pieces such as Kim Krause's "The Nature of Things #8", and Frank Herrmann's "Motif Pool and Slabs" stretch out and take control of the high, white walls on the first floor rotunda, leaving room for some choice loud and soft notes to hold court separately. Krause's piece plays with abstract implied dimension in flat, brilliant color. The composition seems to draw the viewer in, while never quite reaching a definable base. Herrmann pursues his current theme of the pool, it's mysteries emerging as nearly collage images atop rich, dark textures mixed with brick dust and soot into a deeper darkness than mere paint.

Imprinted textures wander like aggressively moving water and winds. In the Duveneck Gallery on the second floor, some smaller watercolor pieces carry the theme more gently, but never still.



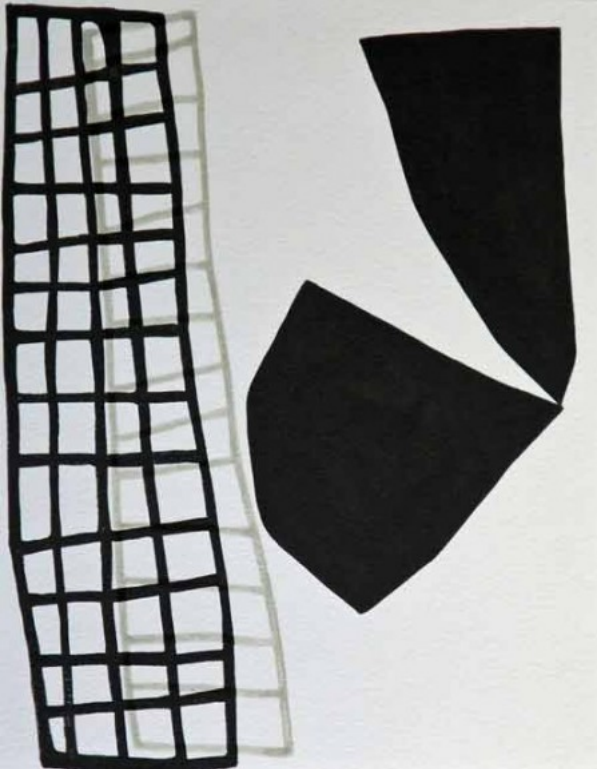
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More or Less, Ink on Paper, 14" x 11", 2009

Another area artist, Jimmy Baker, layers UV digital art and paint to develop "complex compositions", a phrase which merely hints at the magic in his surfaces. In "Pinwale Seive" two realistic hands seem to manipulate the convoluted image, but the image is completely unrecognizable. Only the hands are identifiable. His work involves endless layers over and under the digital print on canvas, enabling him to wreak a unique universe of endless fascination.

Novel construction is the rule of the exhibit. Mark Dejong's concepts are related to a monumental transformation of a Camp Washington building into a giant swing intended to occupy all three floors. A by-product are wooden structures from left-over materials. They seem to convey an energy that carries through Dejong's preoccupation with his project. Then there is the canvas sewn together of other canvases by Paul Thie. Odd sized pieces are quilted into a larger canvas, then some spaces are cut out. At first glance the negative spaces fit so perfectly into the overall composition, that it's easy to assume that they, too, are cut canvas. There are thick yarn squares by Davalene Hogg, which seem to wander into the world of craft. Rainbow colored strands stagger from the base like paint drips. Scottie Bellisemo contrives colored cable ties into geometric sculptures, and Jolie Harris scrapes up dried paint from her used palettes, connects them and hangs them directly on the wall.

Happily there are other pieces simply nailed to the walls. The insistence of galleries on proper frames can often completely destroy the intended effect of art. Sometimes less is best. Kim Rae Taylor's mixed media on paper works are simply nailed to the wall. The irregular surface strewn with collage and paint holds an artistic purpose that contributes to her work. The Paul Thie sewn canvas is bare against the wall. This added dimension is important. It's often part of the artist's interpretation.



[http://aeqai.com/main/2016/05/formal-function-strategies-of-abstraction-through-june-11-2016-at-the-carnegie/williams-arrives-unannounced-ink-on-paper-2009-14\\_x11\\_/](http://aeqai.com/main/2016/05/formal-function-strategies-of-abstraction-through-june-11-2016-at-the-carnegie/williams-arrives-unannounced-ink-on-paper-2009-14_x11_/)

Williams, Arrives Unannounced, Ink on Paper, 2009, 14" x 11"

Once again Paige Williams's work contains much more than their sizes would suggest. Grids in black and white are simply drawn, but hold so much thought inside. Her deep involvement with her art is perceptible, which may be why all three of her pieces on the first floor were sold. Another group of fine, deeply explored abstractions are the several small oil on paper paintings by Bill Renschler. There is more to these than can be seen in a quick glance, that same sincerity that sets Williams's work aside.

Outside-the-box is a given, but perhaps the outside – est is "Pollock Plane" by Justin Hodges, a three foot paper plane form decorated a la Pollock in drips, standing in an upstairs corner. Sometimes it's good to laugh.

It isn't possible to comment on each artist, other than to note that all are exceptional. This exhibit should be considered a learning experience, both to artists and to those who would be more knowledgeable about art.

-Fran Watson

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