

BY JOHN BENTLEY MAYS

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Julie Voyce: silverpoint drawings, at the Garnet Press (580 Richmond St. W.), to Feb. 21.

An assortment of 31 tough drawings that look anything but tough at first glance. Most of these works on paper are little and ragged and, despite the odd accent of pale pink and yellow, their over-all look is white, silvery beige, tentative and bland.

The subtle electricity in these drawings reveals itself only close up, in the minute details of Voyce's working and whiting-out and layering.

In the playful abstract drawings — more effective works, on the whole, than the still lifes here — Voyce bundles together the exquisite hair-lines of silver into abstract sheaves, whips or curls on the page, then over-paints or outlines them with blank white latex. Occasionally, the silver lines are massed into solid gleaming plates of metal; at other times, they are allowed to unravel into fine sprays of filaments.

The results of these various manipulations of silverpoint add up to an engaging workshop display of experiments with a venerable Old Master medium, which has been largely out of fashion with artists for nearly 400 years. They are also engaging instances of an improbable revival. Silverpoint is just that: a point of metallic silver, used to lay down an extremely delicate line on an especially prepared white ground. It is a refined graphic medium non pareil, which makes Voyce's gutsy, bold deployment of it not only historically wrong, but faintly wicked, and even funny.

It will be interesting to see if Voyce can keep working with this medium in her strong feminist way, without being seduced by its exquisite magic.

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