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REVIEW

Threads of a lyrical artist highlight a dense mood

THE NOTION OF LINE: Contemporary Drawings, Serena Bocchino and Gelah Penn. Through April 21 at the Alpan Gallery, 2 W. Carver St. Huntington. For exhibition hours, call 631-423-4433.

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Most of us think of drawing as making marks on paper with pen, pencil or charcoal. But for certain artists, drawing has no connection either to writing implements or paper. It's a matter of line, and how that line grows, evolves and takes shape. For some drawing takes place in space — springing from one corner of a room and exploding outward. For others, it takes place on canvas, with lines of paint dripped or dribbled in sinuous, organic contours.

Each of the two talented artists featured in "The Notion of Line," at the Alpan Gallery in Huntington embraces one of these approaches. Gelah Penn defines her activity most broadly, by stretching, knotting, bunching and stringing exotic materials into glorious 3-D convolutions. She uses fishing twine, Styrofoam balls, synthetic hair and vinyl lanyard to weave delicate designs in space. In some ways they resemble abstract expressionist paintings come to life, springing off the walls and into the viewer's domain.

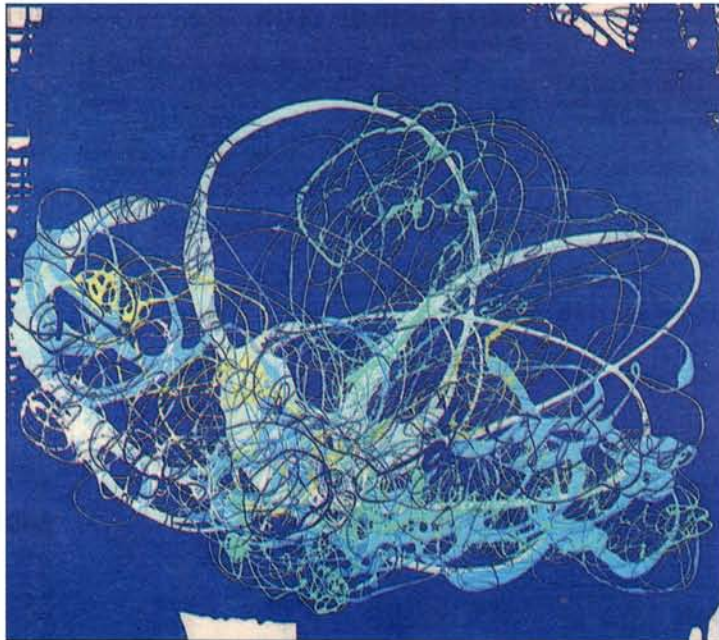
Penn isn't the first to take her drawings off the wall. Think of

the film of Picasso, sketching with light in a dark room; or of Alexander Calder's circus, a drawing-turned sculpture made out of wire. But Gelah Penn is even more concerned with creating environments, thick and fuzzy in places and spare in others, that open new and exciting vistas. Her work is at once vast and tiny, sweeping broadly across a room, but made up of intricate knots and delicate strokes, where empty whiteness sometimes speaks louder than areas filled with dense nests of activity.

Serena Bocchino's paintings

lock's dense, obsessive oeuvre. Bocchino's work breathes and mutates: It's possible to see hints of landscape, of blood vessels pulsing through the body, of galaxies suspended in a vast celestial realm. Her webs of paint could be nets for trapping dreams or they could be multi-armed sea creatures, uncurling their limbs in the depths.

Apart from the large works, each artist has a small wall of works on paper that fall under the traditional rubric of drawing. Penn pins minute, twisted filaments to small sheets. Each is a



ALPAN GALLERY PHOTO

Serena Bocchino's 2007 "Crash Full Rhythm" is uniquely and jazzily her own.

are kindred spirits to Penn's installations. Bocchino, too, uses line in lyrical ways, dripping delicate skeins of paint across her canvases. Bocchino is an even more direct descendant of the abstract expressionists and especially of Jackson Pollock, whose methods and style she adapts.

But it would be wrong to call Bocchino's work derivative. It is jazzily hers, more organic and feminine than anything in Pol-

lock's dense, obsessive oeuvre. Bocchino's work breathes and mutates: It's possible to see hints of landscape, of blood vessels pulsing through the body, of galaxies suspended in a vast celestial realm. Her webs of paint could be nets for trapping dreams or they could be multi-armed sea creatures, uncurling their limbs in the depths. Apart from the large works, each artist has a small wall of works on paper that fall under the traditional rubric of drawing. Penn pins minute, twisted filaments to small sheets. Each is a visual haiku, leaving unsaid as much as they articulate. Bocchino's efforts resemble Penn's in sensibility. They too represent a minimalist version of the larger-format works, with serpentine strands of enamel and oil suspended against gauzy washes of beige. Each line has its own mood-aspects, perhaps, of the same person knotted into coiled tension or unfurled into a wavy strand of joy.