

The Choreography of Line: Jacqueline Rose's 'Abuzz'

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In October 2018 The Cross Art Projects held an exhibition of 13 pencil, ink and collage drawings by Jacqueline Rose. A Sydney-based artist, her works on paper typically display reductive non-figurative forms that record, above all, the constitutive exploration of line.

Rose's work now spans decades. Over time it has gathered a coterie of admirers, sensitive to the meditative possibilities her art elicits. 'Abuzz' transposes the intimate relationship between artist and viewer in the form of a lyrical essay by poet Joanna Featherstone. Like others before her, writer grasps the opportunity to translate the artist's material thinking by means of allusion to a poetics of sound, design, literature and metaphor. Featherstone's words recognise the importance of the viewer's role. In Rose's art, gazing becomes something akin to a ceremonial act of reciprocity.

Rose's drawings characteristically invoke suites of originary tableaux by means of delicately controlled gestural processes. Her lines trace memories of ancient prototypes: a printed book, a calligraphic system and a musical instrument. Earlier works produced sinuous script rendered across multiple sheets. The new drawings are smaller in scale, less serial in form and more self-contained. The patterns have also altered. Line is now suggestive of the rectilinear grid and the maze. Set against colour and monochromatic ink-brushed backdrops, they record a ground finely attuned to the interplay between order and alterity.

To this setting Rose introduces collage. The central procedure of these works, the artist has cut strips of paper, sometimes cutting again to produce smaller units. Laid upon prepared sheets, the pieces make a tentative pattern, which is then adjusted, perhaps remade entirely. Shifted around, guided here and there, continuously subject to the intuitive push-and-pull that is the hand's rhythm, the pieces move until the artist decides her choreography successful.

Paper absorbs its liminal history in all of Rose's work. Her choreography of line produces a strange yet familiar parchment that commemorates what others might relegate to the merely ordinary. 'Abuzz' deepens the continuum, while suggesting through its juxtaposition of image and text that the artist's authority is inseparable from the viewer's purposeful act of mediation.