New Work in *The Reductivist Show* at Prographica, Fine Works on Paper, Seattle, WA

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by David Brody

At its most basic, a drawing is a surface with marks on it. And perhaps the most basic form of mark is line. Once we put a single line on a blank page we have established an *object/ground* relationship, a primary concept in two-dimensional visual art (Fig. 1). A line drawing of a prehistoric bison is an *object* to the *ground* of the cave wall on which it was drawn at Lascaux (Fig. 2). Similarly, Mona Lisa is an *object* to the *ground* of the landscape depicted behind her—as are the fruit and dish in a Cèzanne still-life in their relation to their environment, a tabletop and wall (Fig. 3).

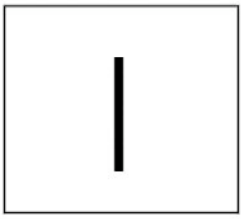

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Line has great utility. When we connect lines so that they close in on themselves we create shape (Fig. 4). When we place lines in the interior of a shape we can create the illusion of three-dimensional volume on the flat page (Fig. 5).

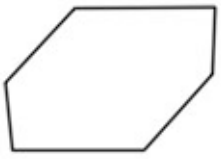

Fig. 4

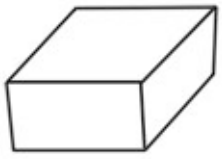

Fig. 5

Lines and grounds exist everywhere around us. Roads and highways stretching across vast continents are formed of lines painted on asphalt grounds—the largest drawing ever made, if unwittingly so (Fig. 6). A humble piece of lined paper *is* a drawing even without further manipulation, though, admittedly, not the most compelling one (Fig. 7). And a striped piece of cloth can be similarly construed as an object/ground line drawing (Fig. 8).

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

The work I am exhibiting in *The Reductivist Show* is constructed with reduced means, employing a limited palette of line and ground. I begin by taking a photograph like those above. The line and ground in the photograph become the line and ground which I use to construct the work itself. Using the elements I abstract from the photograph I compose and edit, altering value, color, scale, perspective, transparency, etc. The extent of the editing is suggested by the source material.

For example, *Checkered Fabric, Red, Number 1* (Fig. 11) was constructed using the photograph of the red-striped fabric (Fig. 8). Working in Adobe Photoshop I cropped a section, duplicated it, flipped it horizontally, adjusted its transparency, and then laid it over the vertical version from which it was cloned to create a checkered ground (Fig. 9). Next, I constructed a three-dimensional block from the same material (Fig. 10) and sandwiched this volumetric form inside the two-dimensional ground. This, of course, produces a spatial contradiction. In nature, three-dimensions cannot be contained within two, but in the peculiar two-and-a-half-dimensional space of the page this readily becomes a visual reality.

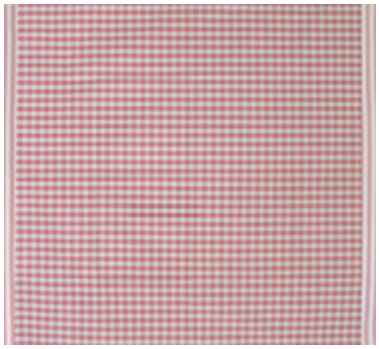

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

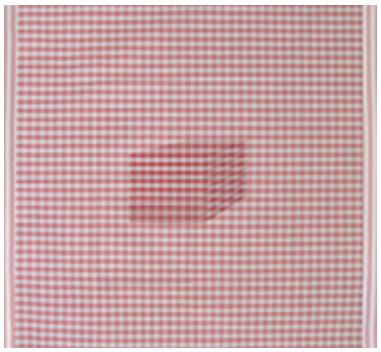

Fig. 11