

ADRIA ARCH: GLYPHOL



Bromfield Gallery
450 Harrison Avenue
Boston

November 4 through 28

While Adria Arch has had an extensive three-decade career as a painter and mixed media artist, it wasn't until she went through her son's high school notebooks three years ago that she found her true inspiration.

"As parents are tempted to do, I wanted to know more about my kid," said Arch, a painting teacher and education director of the Arlington Center for the Arts. "I thought maybe there was a clue in there about his turbulent teenage years. I didn't find any writing, only pages and pages of these doodles."

Ah, but what doodles.

"I was really drawn to the intensity of the markings," Arch said, "the hand we all have, the scrawling marks we make." Being an artist, she thought, "Maybe if I work with them, they'll tell me something."

She took pages of her son's doodles and copied them onto transparencies, and projected them onto a wall to see the shapes in different scales. "The originals were done in pencil in tiny eighth and quarter-inch doodles," Arch said. "Blown up, they're of such fine quality. I wanted to see what they would look like at 1000 percent. They are beautiful, geometric and algebraic."

Arch traces and paints the "glyphs" over what are mainly acrylic silk-screened backgrounds on wood and paper. "The shapes are faithful to the original, albeit in much greater form," she said. "I just place them where I place them and change the color." One of the works has been transcribed into a 10-foot high scroll and more recently, she's been turning them into sculpture.

"The shapes seemed to represent a secret, indecipherable language," Arch wrote in the show's introduction. "I realized they



THIS PAGE TOP TO BOTTOM: *Black Glyph 1*, 2008, acrylic on paper.
Gray Glyph 1 (detail), 2009, acrylic on paper mounted on wood, 30" x 20."
Glyph 11, 2009, acrylic on paper.
RIGHT PAGE: *Gray Glyph 3* (detail), acrylic on paper mounted on wood, 30" x 20."

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could be cryptograms, diagrams, hieroglyphs, pictographs, algebraic formulas or an undiscovered cuneiform script.”

There’s plenty of room for interpretation.

Is that a kite, ball of yarn or clothes hanging on a laundry line in the cartoon-like images of “Swinging Glyphs”? Or is the Jack of Diamonds, a baseball or flags flying over a car dealership more likely to be included in a teenage boy’s set of interests? Are the circular shapes (wagon wheels, to my eye) in the forefront of “Black Glyph 1” divided for psychological reasons, pleasure or mindless relief?

Arch has become a student of the creative process of a doodler. Prior to opening her son’s notebooks she took inspiration from patterning and decorative arts. “It’s the unconsciousness you [represent] in this meditative state,” Arch said. “It’s a vulnerable state to be in. Things come out that might not come out otherwise.”

The hourglass shapes — or perhaps marked off X’s – of “Glyph 11” are screened and traced over faded blotches of color. If they are closed X’s, do they represent a personal wall going up? And are those prehistoric shapes, splitting amoebas and a cave painting in “Pink Glyph Constellation” – or the leftover markings on the bedroom wall of a bored teenager? Arch and her son leave much to the imagination.

So what does Josh Dichen, now 24, think of all this? Arch said her son finds the whole thing humorous and seems fine with it. “At first he was amused, now he is flattered,” she said. “I never got the sense he was embarrassed or upset with me.”

Arch is proud that her artistic journey has brought their relationship to a point where he will help install some of the silk-screened wall images. And while Dichen doesn’t think of the end product as his work, she suspects he’ll be filled with pride on opening night.

| Brian Goslow



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