

ARTILLERY



Val Britton, *Moonscape*, 2014. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery Wendi Norris.

VAL BRITTON

Gallery Wendi Norris / San Francisco

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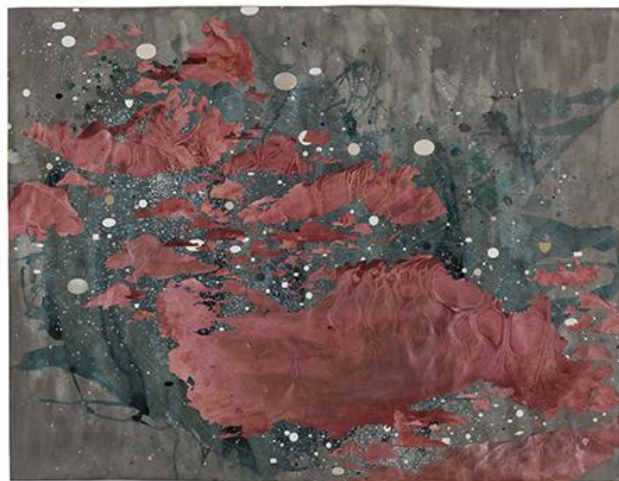
Maps may serve as metaphors for our journey through life, compelling in their ability to arrange potential experience around an objective matrix; the paths taken, and those missed, forever resonate in our subconscious. Taking the map as a point of departure is San Francisco-based artist Val Britton. A graduate of the printmaking program at Rhode Island School of Design, Britton's cartographic impulse arose in graduate school at California College of the Arts from a desire to connect with the memory of her father, a long haul truck driver, through revisiting his cross-country routes.

Britton's recent show, "Passage," at Gallery Wendi Norris featured numerous large-scale collages, and was highlighted by a site-specific installation, *Deluge* (2014), a hovering mass spanning a broad expanse of the gallery's exhibition space. Comprised of hand and laser-cut paper, ink and thread, the forms of *Deluge* bend, curve and intertwine, each suggesting the jagged coastline of a continent, island or other land mass. As her work has evolved over the years, this map has morphed into a simulacrum, with the evocative story of the loss of her father, who died when she was in high school, as well as the poetic subtext of a working class girl from New Jersey making good, becoming sublimated in an elegant thicket of

paper. In this exhibition the central work *Deluge* was surrounded by serious, if somewhat less compelling framed works.



Val Britton, *Reverberation #22*, 2014. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery Wendi Norris.



Val Britton, *Red Planet* 2014. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery Wendi Norris.

Like a sinuous beast, *Deluge* snakes across the space, the paper components forming an arch, although it is not possible to physically enter the space. A variety of papers, in shades of off-white, are employed, ranging from vintage ledger paper to lightweight watercolor paper and vellum. The ledger paper likely relates to a 2010 residency at Recology, where artists create work from materials salvaged from the waste stream. Slender strings in white and pink provide the structural underpinning, wrapped and tied around beams and poles across the ceiling, tied, crisscrossed and woven through the suspended shapes, the strings' tails trailing to where the piece stops just a few inches from the floor. The slightest air current brings the piece alive, as individual elements turn and sway gently in the breeze.



Val Britton, *Reverberation #21*, 2014. Courtesy of the Artist and Gallery Wendi Norris.

Moonscape (2014), a large-scale collage, layers geometric and organic forms of cut paper, some of which is painted by a process of drips and stains, the result in effect a patina, evocative of the passage of time. Slender lines of paint suggest the journeys traced out by airline route maps. In 2012, Britton was awarded a commission for a large-scale two dimensional work, executed in glass, to be installed at the San Francisco International Airport this year—one of numerous awards, commissions and residencies, including one with global giant Facebook, which have marked her rising profile on the Bay Area scene. While the two-dimensional works lack the stirring and expansive feeling of the installation, overall Britton has mounted an impressive show, lending credence to the thought she will avoid the temptation to make corporate art, and instead pursue a more personal vision.

<http://artillerymag.com/val-britton/>