

ARTFORUM

Rosana Castrillo Diaz: Anthony Meier Fine Arts

By Glen Helfand
April 2007

Office supplies have been a consistent subject of and medium in Rosana Castrillo Diaz's demure art for the past few years. Over that time, she has become known for near-invisible Scotch-tape installations and exquisitely detailed drawings of stacks of paper, notebook spines, and wads of rubber bands. Castrillo Diaz's recent exhibition took things a step further, revealing both the effectiveness and the shortcomings of a practice reliant on obsessive detail.

The show's visually elusive centerpiece was a 2007 work (all works untitled) constructed from loops of transparent tape affixed not to the wall but to each other, forming clusters of larger circular forms. These hang on pins that extend from the wall, so that the tape forms seem to float parallel to the vertical surface at slightly varying distances (looking at the work head-on, the circular lines look razor thin and appear to be alternately etched or suspended). The whole reads as a geometric abstraction that might allude to cellular structure, or suggest large, ghostly, Pop-ish polka dots.

Diaz's materials and methods evoke those of Tara Donovan, who uses common objects en masse to make deceptively solid sculpture. But Castrillo Diaz's use of accretion is more an attempt to redefine drawing in a three-dimensional (yet oddly wraithlike) form. It's an ambition that she has realized ever more completely since first contributing an abstract tape work to the group show "Warped Space" at the CCA Wattis Institute in 2003. But she now runs the risk of allowing her signature methodology to devolve into shtick. A commissioned tape piece on view concurrently at the Berkeley Art Museum benefited from more breathing room in the angular modernist interior, but otherwise was essentially the same piece as the one on view here.

Similar looping shapes are also apparent in two photorealistic graphite drawings of rubber bands that feel as substantial as the tape does atmospherically ethereal. Clumped and bound together, the bands are tightly rendered in the center of pieces of otherwise unmarked paper and look to be illuminated by the harsh, flat light of a scanner. Another graphite drawing depicts a small pile of legal pads, seen from below against a dark background. Formally, these works evoke Felix Gonzalez-Torres's pile pieces and allude to his interest in making art at the margins. Castrillo Diaz also emphatically makes work that may easily be overlooked.

Such is also the case with a few pieces in which the artist expands her range of materials. Two works from 2007 are small sheets of graph paper from which the squares have been carefully removed from between the lines, turning them into webs that slump and curl from the wall. Unfortunately, these fragile skeins suffer from the current ubiquity of this kind of labor-intensive, Eva-Hesse-with-an-X-Acto-knife deconstruction of binding geometry. Castrillo Diaz employs a correspondingly familiar strategy of fanatical delicacy in a 2006 series of small white-on-white paintings on paper, each with a square of nearly microscopic painted acrylic pattern at its center. Like the tape piece, these monochromes require the viewer to get close and shift angles in order to observe the fine brushwork.

More memorable is a compact 2006 drawing of three gourds with mottled, moldy-looking surfaces, the patterning of which extends to the edges of the composition. Reminiscent of Vija Celmins's drawings of rock surfaces, Castrillo Diaz's objects, rendered in dense pointillism, are imbued with an alluring ambiguity not found in the subjects procured at Office Depot. An anomaly in this exhibition, the drawing affirms that Castrillo Diaz has the skill to render whatever she trains her eye on, but, at the same time, it makes one wish that she would take advantage of that ability to expand her purview.