



Rainbow Barb

SURFACE TREATMENT

What: **Isabel Link: Elements and Principles**
Where: Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12th Street, Mission
When: Through August 4, 2018
Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 10am-2pm Saturday
Call to confirm
Contact: (956) 583-2787
Free and open to the public

Down to Basics

An upbeat exhibit informed by the artist's role as an artist-teacher.

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

"Elements and Principles", on display at the Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, rejoices in the basic art elements. Artist Isabel Link embraces her dual roles as artist and art teacher with this color-saturated body of work in colored pencil, acrylics, and mixed media by creating a joyous exhibition. The works are numerous and show different aspects of her relationships with colored pencils and acrylics. The colored pencil works are warmly engaging, and although the vast majority of work is abstract, there are some representational works of barbed wire imagery that fit right in.

Link says that she started her art career with colored pencil, and her technique with this medium is assured, visually placing these works ambiguously between paintings and drawings. With rich color application, nuanced tonal changes, and crisp edges, we assume they are paintings until a glance at the label informs us otherwise. "Kaleidoscope" shifts from calm standard shapes to jagged patterns in the center – like vertically reading an EKG from a previously unknown creature. Commenting about the formal elements that figure so

prominently in her work, Link said, "I see the formal elements really standing out. I love pattern; I love geometric shapes, lines, and working with them all together, and for a teacher, you're supposed to be the master of them all." When she decided to take on acrylic painting, the medium changed, but the elements stayed. "Entropy", a stunning acrylic work is difficult to distinguish from the pencil work, except the scale is much larger. This work expands upon tonal variations, color relationships, optics, and illusion, playing with both color and shape. The outlines act as some sort of artistic membrane that keeps the contents of shapes within their designated boundaries. A group of paintings occupying the south wall embody a looser brush technique and do not fare as well. Mixed media works incorporating fabric are seen reflecting both abstract and representational approaches; the bold use of this material breaks from the rest of the exhibit and leaves us feeling as though happened in from another show somewhere.

The colored pencil images of barbed wire sometimes take on a playful attitude, and other times are more somber. "No Boundaries" shows strands of barbed wire, its open spaces penetrated by butterflies. Link touches lightly on the political conversation with this one; she wonders, is the wire keeping us in or keeping us out? At least the butterflies and other insects can fly through the wire without feeling fenced in. She also uses the barbed wire imagery for another kind of symbolism in a group of three vertical drawings, "New Wire", "Aging", and "Wired". Here, she uses the wire to denote aging and suggests the futility of preventing the natural process. "They (the wires) are starting out young and new," she muses, "then they pick up a few wrinkles - rusted areas - and finally at the bottom they are crumbling. It's the process of life and how you can't prevent it."

However, the overall tone of "Elements and Principles", is playful and very upbeat. Link projects a love of the principles and elements that formulate the essence of Modern art. It's what she teaches her students and what she believes to be of utmost importance for the creative art process.

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