

# sculpture

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Debra Weisberg, *Holding the Center Still*, 2022. Pulp-coated wire, hot glue, abaca, glue, and polymer medium, dimensions variable. Photo: Courtesy Piano Craft Gallery

## Debra Weisberg & “Material Drawing Redux”

## Boston

### Piano Craft Gallery

Debra Weisberg's "Holding the Center Still" ([on view](#) through March 27, 2022) transforms a spacious gallery into an environment of organic compositions, which look as if they have whirled out from a central installation to reach the surrounding walls. These works present a variety of ways of "making," held together by the common thread of an obsessive impulse to experiment and explore, to push the limits of materials to encompass entirely new forms of expression.

Although printmaking is a primary process in the wall pieces, these works do not resemble typical prints. Combining embossed patterns and collaged elements, they are more like wall reliefs. Portions of the heavily textured elements are sometimes re-adapted from earlier pieces. *Collaged Etching 3* displays an enormous freedom and sense of flow, like nature brought indoors. Weisberg speaks of a geological layering of elements in which the imagery emerges from the construction, akin to her sculptural process.

The wall works are mostly limited to tones of black, white, and grey, the infinite variations making one wonder just how many gradated shades actually exist between the pristine white of the substrate and the darkest black of a thread, a wire, twisted paper, or drawn line. *Collaged Drawing 1* incorporates graphite on vellum, tape, black hot glue, and pieces of a former etching. *Gimel*, a wing-like collage over embossed monoprints, is a five-foot tour de force of lacy layers; it hangs freely off the wall, casting shadows that enhance its depth.

*Holding the Center Still* fills the central space with a combination of open work and structure. Clearly, process is the motivating force in this installation. The apparent spontaneity, however, belies the extensive preparatory work that went into making the extended sculpture. It's almost as if a low-lying ground fog were stilled and given form. The ability to move among the sections adds to the inherent organic quality.

A second show, "Material Drawing Redux," installed in an adjacent gallery (and also on view through March 27), features works by three of Weisberg's longstanding friends—[Audrey Goldstein](#), [Michelle Samour](#), [Julia Shepley](#)—whom she invited to share works that have sprung from their 15-year dialogue. All three are

sculptors, and like Weisberg, they employ a wide range of ideas and experimental techniques as part of an exploratory drawing process. Materiality is key to all of their expressions, underscoring the particularity of sculptors' drawings.





Michelle Samour, *Land of Milk and Honey* (detail), 2017. Burnt wood, milk paint, beeswax, plaster, and steel, 17 x 11 x 5 in. Photo: Courtesy Piano Craft Gallery

The charred and drilled wooden tablets of Samour's *Land of Milk and Honey* reference her father's loss of his historic homeland in Palestine. Bits and pieces of the destroyed wood are also embedded into plaster, milk paint, and beeswax, mirroring the cyclical nature of questions surrounding homeland, exile, and diaspora. Where is the Promised Land? Whose Promised Land?

Goldstein's collections of familiar household objects encased in hand-dyed silk organza beg to be touched, and in fact, the artist invites touch. In *Handhelds, 5 Objects of Contact*, she limited herself to five objects, akin to the syllable count of haiku. Her careful stitchery, almost like drawn marks, joins variegated pieces of organza in a tight skin, which encases the disparate pieces into one new object that is fascinating and sensuous in the hand.

Shepley's "Striking a Light" series was inspired by black match strikes on the stone façade of the courthouse in Edinburgh, Scotland. She uses raw pigment in her cast paper molds to give delicate color to these three-dimensional drawings, which incorporate fragments of Audrey Henderson's poems on the same theme. The dynamic and layered marks, which resemble prison bars, were made with real matches.

The works in these two exhibitions are formidable—the result of long experience and dedication to process. Weisberg, who brought a sculptor's excitement and openness to her recent fellowship at the Pyramid Atlantic Printmaking and Papermaking Center, applies the same qualities to the works in "Holding the Center Still," which were also influenced by her yoga practice. The dance between stillness and movement in her installation and wall reliefs is remarkable, expressing a deep inner state of balance. Both shows epitomize the

best of the art spirit. Weisberg, Samour, Goldstein, and Shepley exemplify a sensitive and open embrace of the possible, pairing consummate skill with a willingness to move forward and stretch into the “beyond,” wherever it goes.

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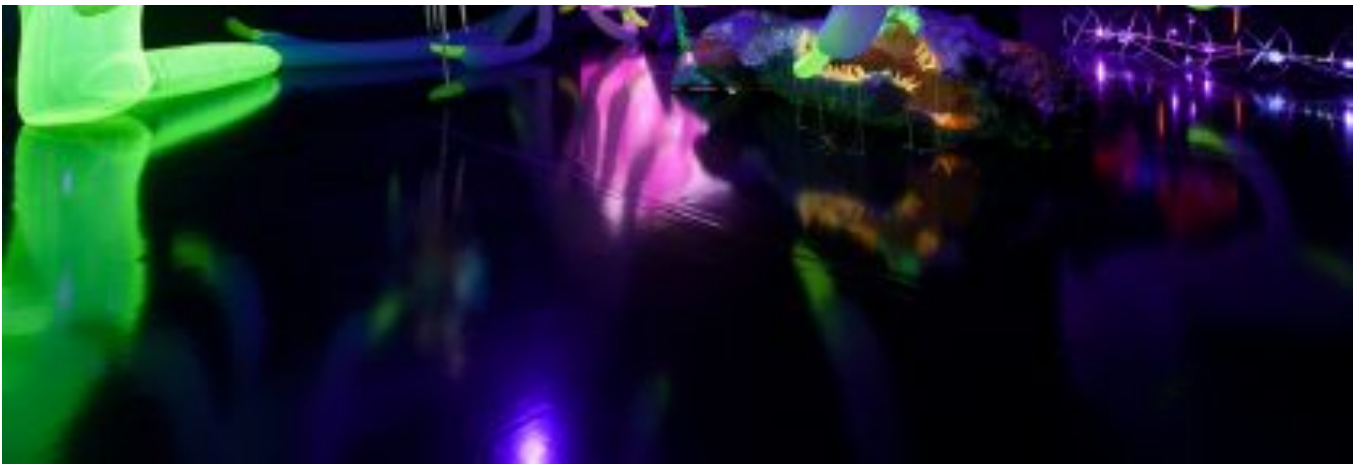
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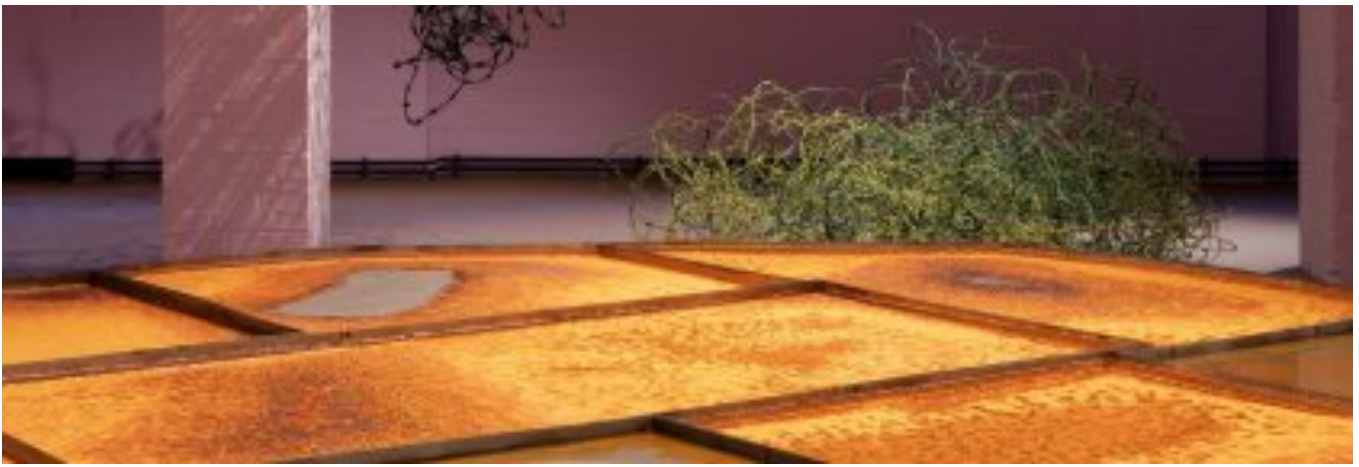






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