

M A R G A R E T
T H A T C H E R
P R O J E C T S

MODERN PAINTERS

Adam Fowler

By William Hanley
September 2012

SAN FRANCISCO

Adam Fowler

Brian Gross Fine Art // May 3–June 30



Adam Fowler
Untitled (four layers), 2012.
Graphite on paper, hand-cut and layered, 23 x 18½ in.

FWLER HAS A FETISH for lines. He is less enthusiastic about paper. The New York-based artist draws spiraling abstractions—think of more orderly Cy Twombly curlicues—in graphite and charcoal, then meticulously excises the white space around the marks. He stacks the winnowed sheets of paper on top of one another and pins them in place to add layers of depth. Detailed and labor-intensive, the process takes a while, which is why Fowler's first solo show at the gallery consists of only six works.

Small as it is, the exhibition demonstrates the range of tricks of contrast and depth that Fowler employs. *Untitled (three layers)*, 2012, tosses nests of curves over one another, creating a chaotic filigree. He renders the graphite lines with varied weights and places a layer with some of the heaviest marks on the top of the stack, bringing it far into the foreground. Fainter lines appear to fade even further into the composition for being placed a few millimeters

below the other layers.

Monochrome abstractions that refuse to settle on a discernible surface, Fowler's tangles have a dizzying electricity. Many are frenetic and dense, but two works in the show give his lines more breathing room while maintaining an ecstatic visual hum. The most emphatic strokes in the exhibition track a broad wavelength across a horizontal plane, in another untitled three-layered work from 2012. The line's quieter neighbors echo in the distance. The only work with four layers, a pile of graphite swoops cascading down a vertical field, also has the most open space. By dispatching with some of the density, Fowler lets the gestural side of his process come through. He holds onto a sense of his hand moving across the lost paper, adding an impulsive energy to the most dynamic fields in the exhibition. They would feel almost spontaneous had they not clearly taken so long to make.

—William Hanley