

# Gambit Weekly,

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Art Review

by D. Eric Bookhardt

## Pattern Recognition

It's one of those cybernetic things — pattern recognition is about programming computers to classify random data according to statistical or hypothetical patterns. Why? So they'll know, that's why. Know what? So they'll know if you're a terrorist or not, if you're pregnant or not, if you like chocolate or not, or if you have any clue that your actions are being monitored at this very moment or not. If it sounds extreme, don't forget all those little spyware cookies accumulating information about your behavior every time you get on the Internet and reporting back to *them*, whoever they are. But this is just a rather new ripple in a very old story. History is all about patterns, after all.

All of which somehow came to mind when pondering two shows on Julia Street and what they have, or don't have, in common. Both are fairly stunning despite seeming almost monochromatic at first glance. Teresa Cole's *Shift* at Bienvenu puts her more experimental work of previous shows into a more clearly accessible focus that highlights her interest in patterns. *Untitled 1* is a kind of shadow box containing a relief print of nothing much, just wavy lines like the magnified crosshatching of an antique engraving. The shadow box is covered with copper wire screen printed in pale blue curlicues like the ornamental ironwork so often found on the porches of old New Orleans homes. The perspective shifts as you move, but what you see is only patterns floating over patterns, yet it's textural and mysterious, almost kind of sexy. *Untitled Pattern 1* is bigger but simpler, a large relief print hanging loosely on the wall. It's a Victorian ornamental design, but the bottom half digresses into a flame pattern of the sort often found on the hotrods and muscle cars of the 1960s — a progression of patterns shifting from vintage middlebrow to latter day lowbrow in a whimsical excursion in time.

*Sting* is a 4-by-7-foot diptych. On the right is a relief print that looks like a blowup of part of an antique steel engraving of a hand against the folds of a Victorian coat. Flanking it is a starburst pattern — actually the forms of interlocking mosquitoes — a decorative chain of pain, or maybe a meditation on yellow fever in a more decorous age. But *Shift* is an installation of smaller prints shaped like women's shifts, or 1940s-era swimsuits, blazoned with

decorative designs such as flora, fauna, poodles, butterflies, intestines or what have you. That sense of whimsy is reprised in a series of long, narrow, scroll-like intaglio prints of patterns of ironwork, blossoms, half-tone dots, cryptic code from banking statements and other images from daily life. At this rate, your own shadow, downloaded from a secret security camera, may be next, but if it ends up looking as good as the rest of this show, no one will mind.

Equally splendid, albeit rather different, is the *Order* exhibition of paintings by Deborah Pelias at Heriard-Cimino. Minimal yet surprisingly complex, *Order* features a visual counterpoint between the gridlike structure of her canvases and their subtler and more translucent surfaces that seem to float over or through them. For instance, most of *Indent* suggests a microscopic blow-up of a patch of loose cotton fabric set off by a porous border. Hivelike yet vaguely industrial, it's a black-and-white clash of textures contrasting the organic and the inorganic in a minimalist poetry of patterns. *Array* is a grid of red circles shifting to white against a background that is mostly red but gradually shifting to black, and the mind has a hard time deciding if it's industrial or organic — a cross section of insulated cables or gila monster capillaries — but it's visually stunning either way. An organic sensibility holds sway in most of the others, with pale horizontal bands stacked like Chinese hexagrams hovering over dark, inky voids and hivelike mystery structures. Others are enveloped in exotic surfaces, the translucent skin of rare tropical creatures, perhaps, and the look is restrained yet rhythmic, order on the cusp of chaos, the magical frontier where the imagination meets nature's mysteries. **GW**

**SHIFT: EXHIBITION OF HAND-PULLED PRINTS BY TERESA COLE**

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