

**Mia Pearman and Gareth Bell-Jones**  
**C4RD, London, 10 April - 2 May 2008**

**Reviewed by: Lucinda Holmes**

On entering the Centre for Recent Drawing's intimate space, I was pleasantly stunned by Mia Pearlman's Eye - a giant swirl of cut and inked paper, lit from below, casting shadows, as it expanded onto the ceiling and walls. This work had instant appeal with an energy akin to Pop Art, in particular Lichtenstein's Wham. Along side responding to Pearlman's site-specific installation, were Gareth Bell-Jones's arduous but carefully cut drawings.

Both artists employ the knife as their drawing tool: the drag of the blade through paper to generate a negative space. Like conventional drawing, where the mark activates the ground, the cut also activates the ground and has a direct relationship to the remaining white paper. The empty cut areas, in both Pearlman and Bell-Jones's work, allowed us to see the white walls of the gallery behind it and the paper of the drawing cast a traceless shadow on to the walls, creating a sort of negative double of the physical drawing but appearing in shadow. Bell-Jones's drawings reflect bright and luminous colour present on the reverse of the front facing white ground, producing colour that is not overt but glowing from behind the white surface and emphasising the edge of each hand cut hole. The visibility of the wall behind and the shadows, are aspects of both artists' works. Their drawings are not discrete objects, but pieces that use and engage with the nature of their location. This is in contrast to the famous 'cut artist' Lucio Fontana who, in his pierced and slashed paintings, covered the back of his canvases with black cloth so that the negative space was intangible, inaccessible and not part of the gallery space: almost other worldly.

The diagrammatic, or map like references in Bell-Jones's work involve the representation of a different scale of space, a scale that is consistent within each work but could be microscopic or geographic. In Pearlman's Eye it represents the eye of a storm, relocating us again to something outside the works immediate context. This work reminds me of Da Vinci's Deluge, 1517, where there is also a circulating energy of lines.

I especially liked the contrast between Bell-Jones's Diagram and Pearlman's Eye in the central space. In Diagram, Bell-Jones had cut out all the empty space between the lines of the linking network diagram and then reversed it Leaving a delicate white net with its double in grey, its shadow cast behind it on the wall. In Diagram, traces of the original colour of the diagram are slightly apparent along the edges of the delicate cuts. With his systematic work any mistake ruins the final outcome, where as Pearlman's organic explosive work contains our fallible gesture.

This exhibition is a considered and visually exciting investigation into drawing as a negative act of mark making, the removal of the ground as apposed to the mark resting on it. It is well worth seeing, but after seeing the stunning Eye by Pearlman take time to look carefully at the drawings in response by Bell-Jones, which are just as stimulating but not as instantaneous.