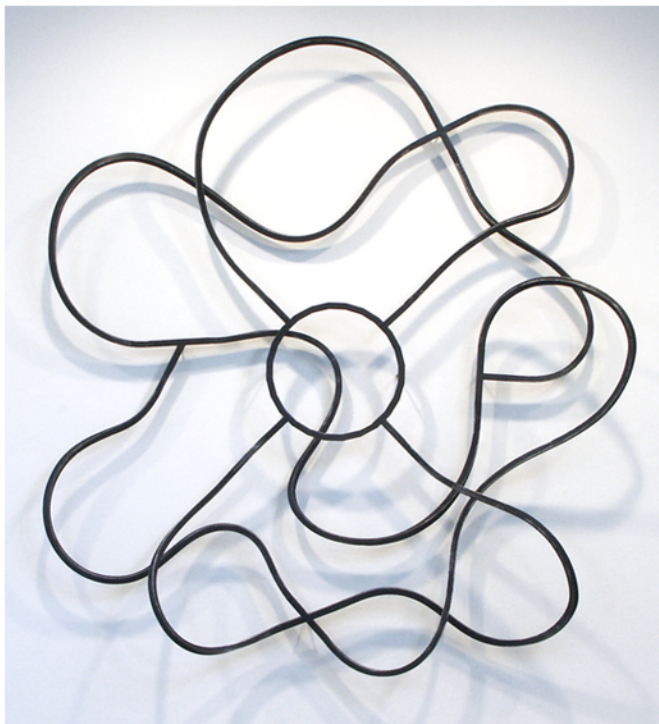


## Sculptors drawn to the power of suggestion

By Cate McQuaid

Michael Beatty  
Perimeter  
Barbara Krakow Gallery  
10 Newbury St., Boston  
May 24—July 1, 2008-05-25  
barbarakrakowgallery.com



Drawing requires the artist's most delicate touch, and sculpture the most forceful. We don't often think of the two forms in one work, but maybe we should, because three exhibitions up now - Michael Beatty at Barbara Krakow Gallery, Gregory Gómez at OH+T Gallery, and Cal Lane at Judi Rotenberg Gallery - feature works by sculptors, many of whose sculptures read like drawings.

Beatty, in an artist's statement, refers to his pieces as maps and declares that they give "physical reality to emotional topography." He has two fun, inviting bodies of work here, both wall sculptures. The one that invokes drawing pairs lines of looping beech wood with lines of steel; the two materials, and the forms they take, read like a clash, or a collaboration, between right brain and left, the fluidly emotive and the rational.

"Full Circle" sports a long strand of wood circling like the loops of a shoelace within a steel ring. It's a full circle, all right, but so pinched it folds over on itself. Compare that to the unbound "Here and There," with wild lines orbiting the center circle like electrons buzzing about the nucleus of an atom, and steel joints at the intersections that seem to keep everything from flying apart, or "Even Keel," in which a goofy spiral of wood twines around a sensible passage of stair-stepping steel.

Each of these weighs volume against line, and in this body of work line wins. The shadows they cast on the wall and the way they squiggle and strut in space bring drawing into three dimensions.

In Beatty's second grouping, volume carries the day. These untitled abstract pieces, carved out of layers of plywood, sprout from the wall, each a flat-face blossom with voluptuously beveled sides. The emotional topography is here, too: The faces, washed in pale milk paint and running with the vertical edges of the sand-wiched wood, bring to mind the farmer couple in Grant Wood's "American Gothic" - prim, a little dour. But those curvaceous edges suggest depths of sensuality refusing containment.

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