

Liliana Porter: 1973



Liliana Porter, 'Untitled (Hands and Triangle)



Liliana Porter, 'Untitled (Line Horizontal)

By Vicki Goldberg

Geometry wins. The visual world is saturated with it, chiefly in rectangles and squares: buildings, doors, windows, television and computer and hand-held screens. From its invention, photography was rectangular (and sometimes square), no doubt to emulate the familiar form of paintings. During most of the photograph's history the image stayed sedately within the frame, and photographers zeroing in on geometric subjects turned a modernist eye on modernist buildings or constructed still lifes out of bricks, bowls, dice and other handy geometric forms. A small show of Liliana Porter's black-and-white photographs at Barbara Krakow Gallery through April 20 quietly and wittily makes hash of this tradition.

In three photographs of the artist's hand, a line was drawn on finger or palm and refused to stop there but strode out audaciously over the mat and over the frame and would not stop even there but ventured onto the wall. In a picture of the

palm, one point of a triangle frames the fourth and fifth fingers. These two fingers make an inverted triangle within the penciled one, and yet another pencil finishes the rest of the triangle on the gallery's white wall.

Lines that stay within the frame play their own clever tricks. Three hands are so arranged that a small triangle of shadow sits just between their overlap, and a triangle is drawn bumpily over the hands themselves to frame that little dark moment. In another picture, a man and a woman have put their heads side by side, face front. A rectangle is drawn around his right eye and her left eye, the two being right next to each other, thus outlining a third pair of eyes in a picture that one might suppose had two.

Geometries here are determinedly human rather than photographic, the pencil lines being a little woozy. In *Self Portrait With Square*, the "square" around one of Porter's eyes and half of her nose aspires to be a rectangle that stretches

beyond the face, but there it wilts downward as if too tired to stay on course.

These photographs, taken in 1973, have metamorphosed over the years and hold a hidden tale about time and photographers' changing ideas. In the negatives the lines reached beyond the hands but only to the surface those hands were resting on. Porter never printed these images until last year, when she extended the lines to the edge of the photograph and subsequently instructed the gallery to draw the lines that break through the frame and travel over the gallery walls. Today any digital adept can break the frame, but few relate a photograph's content so engagingly to the world just beyond it.

Liliana Porter

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,
10 Newbury St.,
through April 20th.
617-262-4490,
barbarakrakowgallery.com

BARBARA

KRAKOW GALLERY