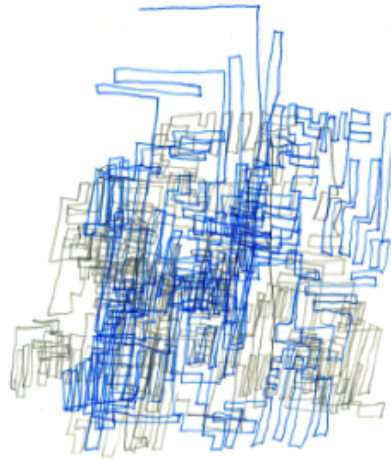


# **ART REVIEW: Leading Nowhere to Somewhere - Linda Ekstrom projects her unique drawing sensibility on the theme of various labyrinths, now at the Jane Deering Gallery**

By Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent

April 19, 2013 12:14 PM



***labyrinth: manuscript: 15*** 2007-2009 . ink and graphite pencil on paper . 8 x 10 inches

**G**etting an easy handle on the art and artistic thinking of Linda Ekstrom can be difficult business, to her credit, but the riddling aspects of her work tend to be more logical, focused and concept-driven than first impressions might suggest. So it goes with her deceptively subtle and mild-mannered new exhibition at the Jane Deering Gallery, 'labyrinth.'

Her exquisite but never smug series of drawings based on labyrinths, with a few sculptural deviations in the gallery, speak softly but carry some big ideas. The show is tellingly divided between sources from Christian antiquity, garden labyrinths and manuscript examples as sources from which to vary and recontextualize the contemplative puzzles at hand, mazes through which, as she says in her statement 'one may feel lost, but one is never lost.'

Ms. Ekstrom's artistic ways and means include book art -- questioning, deconstructing and reshaping our impression of books -- and drawings, with an angle or two, and sculptures behaving like something else. In group show appearances in town over the last few years, including 'Achromatic Variations' at Deering, 'Density' at the Atkinson Gallery and in last year's faculty show 'WORK' at

UCSB's College of Creative Studies, she has tended to appear like the quiet one in the corner with sly ideas rising up out of an introspective place rather than showy verve.

This body of work, she explains, grew out of her interest in land art, perhaps the most famous example of which is circular vertigo and visceral energy of Robert Smithson's 'Spiral Jetty.' Of course, Ms. Ekstrom goes in the opposite expressive direction from the splashy 'Jetty,' with its knotty fragile realm of small, hermetic-yet-airy drawings. Ghostly echoes of gray lines play off the more vividly colored lines, like out-of-sync and slightly dissonant harmonies.



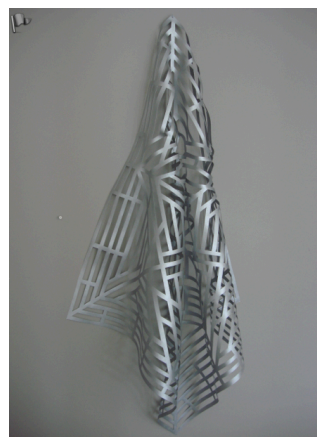
***labyrinth: turf: 2*** 2007-2009 . ink and graphite pencil on paper . 8 x 10 inches

Color-coding and other visual distinctions enters into her programming of the different series, from the red and graphite patterns in the 'Church labyrinth' series, in patterns which yearn to be resolved but never quite are. Green and gray forms percolate in the 'Turf labyrinth' series, with more rounded and even turf-like patterns, while blue squiggles and visually electric energies mark the 'Manuscript labyrinths' series of drawings.



***garden: 2: outside the labyrinth*** . handcut tyvek, acrylic paint. 50x24x12 inches (approximate)

On the back wall, things get physical and three-dimensional with her silver-painted mesh pieces in the droopy synthetic material of handcut tyvek, a three-part series called 'garden: outside the labyrinth.' Here, the geometry of the enmeshed lines and patterns is neater and cleaner, ostensibly, except that -- and it's a big 'except that' -- the pieces naturally sag, bunch and furl through the manner of their hanging on a single nail.



left: ***garden: 1: outside the labyrinth*** . handcut tyvek, acrylic paint . 50x24x12 inches (approximate)

right: ***garden: 3: outside the labyrinth*** . handcut tyvek, acrylic paint . 50x24x12 inches (approximate)

In another case of the artist's clever rerouting of perceptions in the gallery, her art book pieces 'Ariadne's Love I, II and III' have been decoratively adorned and repressed with silver thread. As such, Ms. Ekstrom bounds and 'draws on' books-as-objects, effectively sewn shut and altered from their operable, readable function.

Art with its re-inventive nature meets the conventionally neutral physicality of books, and the first medium entangles with the other. In a similar way, the artist bases each 'labyrinth' drawing on a specific, actual example in the known historical world, but runs the original through her deconstructionist-oriented personal filter. Rebel impulses aside, she nonetheless kills us softly and leaves no psychic bruises.

## ART REVIEW

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### LINDA EKSTROM | labyrinth

**When:** Through April 28th . 2013

**Where:** Jane Deering Gallery . 128 E. Canon Perdido Street

**Hours:** 11am to 5pm Tuesday through Saturday . Sunday 1-4pm

**Information:** janedeeringgallery.com

above (in shadow): ***labyrinth: church: 17 2007-2009*** . ink and graphite pencil . 8 x 10 inches