

# electric city

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## The Artists' Studio: *ec/dc's* bi-monthly gallery tour

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### Art on top of art

One of the many small sheets of paper pulled from artist Karl Neuroth's sketch books hanging on the wall at Laura Craig Galleries reads like a Gertrude Stein bit: "drawing on top of drawing on top of drawing." The image is indeed composed of fine lines, laid one across another again and again at various degrees in an intensely dark overlay. Step back and you'll see this subconscious scribble manifest in another form. Hundreds of small works titled together to compose the artist's new exhibit, *horror vacui*.

The title refers to the ancient idea of "fear or emptiness." The term has been applied in art — often to Victorian aesthetics and a style of works from India — to refer to a more suffocating cluttering of space with detail than Neuroth's more airy shapes. Perhaps the empty space isn't so scary once it's been carefully contained within patterns as negative space. When these shapes and patterns are arranged to fill an entire gallery wall, it's the artist's profundity that takes the form of *horror vacui*. The exhibit docu-

ments his compulsion to create — whether inking patterns on blank pages or erecting those patterns in three dimensions of space.

Neuroth's work is generally displayed in this quilt-like fashion, albeit in a more finished form, often mounted on colorfully painted wooden squares. They are intended to be combined in whatever combination the collector desires and rearranged at a whim. Because of this, the works are exceptionally collectable. It's almost impossible to live with just one, especially after seeing the magic that happens when they are placed in varying combinations.

"When you juxtapose them you get a whole new psychology and emptiness. So if you pick two pieces that appear to have nothing in common, it's very interesting to see what happens to your thought about what those two pieces are saying to each other," Craig offered last week as the exhibit was still being hung.

The artist suspects he's been influenced by the sound bite mentality of our culture that flashes visuals before our eyes with increasing speed. At least one



watercolor pulled by Laura Craig and curator Bob Schweitzer from Neuroth's vast archives for this exhibit, dates back to 1982 and shows an earlier side of the artist.

Some of the more recent squares are research sketches Neuroth was doing on ritual Chinese bronze vessels at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Others contain notes about what was going on at the time of the sketch (e.g. Hilary Clinton wins democratic pri-

mary in New Hampshire!) or aesthetics, as in "Void Dot Dash and Squiggle." One series uses a multiple printing technique to achieve a vibrating effect.

Laura Craig Galleries is located at 307 Linden St. in Scranton. A reception for Karl Neuroth: *horror vacui* will be held Friday from 5 to 8 p.m. The work will remain on display through April 19 and can be viewed by appointment. Call 963-7995 for more information.