

WEIGHT forbids that Things be only join'd
By Stroke, and outward Force; and lest the Mind
Should be by strong Necessity confin'd,
And, overcome, endure Fate's rigid Laws,
This little declination is the cause.

Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 2.275-80

*Drawing & Painting with Lucretius:
Janis Goodman's "Cross Currents" at Reyes + Davis*

What is it about the depiction of 'unsettled states' that gives us comfort, solace, and often pleasure? Where are we? Where are we going? When are we? When are we leaving? We usually want to know the answers to these questions, but not knowing has its advantages. Janis Goodman's work offers no answers, but what it does offer is perhaps more valuable, a deep acceptance of the questions in their unanswerability. Her recent paintings and drawings in *Cross Currents*, a new exhibition of her work at Reyes + Davis, can be read as abstractions from nature as well as depictions of nature. In fact, it's the hovering between the two that gives her work a strange sense of 'frenetic calm.' Even though the marks and colors are fixed, they refuse to remain static. "Look again, see again, think again," is what they ask. The marks themselves—the heavy black marks—have they been 'set down' on the surface or are they 'flying free' from the surface? The ripples in the water? What causes them? Where is the bottom? Is the water itself floating in the air? Look again. Water is slippery, so is air. So are we.

The Roman poet and natural philosopher Lucretius (99-55 BCE) believed that everything is in flux all the time and that stasis is an illusion. You can't dip your foot in the same river twice because the river is never the same, different water atoms pass through it every moment. Janis Goodman's work in *Cross Currents* graphically embodies this Lucretian idea. The agitated surfaces of her paintings and drawings give way to hinted patterns, and the eye of the viewer gives way to the mind of the viewer. Then everything flips back, and flips again, an oscillation of seeing and thinking. Goodman embraces these seeming contradictions, her painting "describes and well as suggests change, constancy, and rhythm." This is the nature of things; Janis Goodman's work in *Cross Currents* makes it possible for us to perceive it as such.