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## Ewan Gibbs: Pictures of Pitchers

Lora Reynolds Gallery, through April 19

The work of British artist Ewan Gibbs reminds us that every drawing is essentially an accumulation of individual marks. Gibbs makes identical hash marks of varying weight, one in each box on a gridded sheet of paper. Add the graphite slashes up, and an image becomes legible. For his first exhibition at Lora Reynolds in 2005, Gibbs presented scenes of New York City as seen from the Empire State Building's observation deck. Similar work is included in his current show in the form of seductive urban nocturnes that translate his drawing practice into linocut prints. But the main attraction of "Pictures of Pitchers" is the eight drawings of baseball pitchers – each named for the city in which his team originates – that ring the front room at Lora Reynolds.

Gibbs' work is based on photographs that he selects for their engagement of specific qualities inherent to the medium, including the way that photographs can capture an instant imperceptible to the naked eye. His pitchers are frozen in the moment just after each one has released the ball. They end up looking oddly like flamingos, balanced precariously on one leg while the other extends gracefully into the air.

The pitchers' extreme, almost balletic contortion is surprising; yet odder still is the fact that each pitcher assumes the same strange pose, rather than this being the idiosyncratic posture it would seem to be. Therefore, Gibbs also takes advantage of the photograph's ubiquity, which allows him to select images of different players at discrete places and times that nevertheless all appear strikingly similar. In addition, the parallel poses mirror Gibbs' artistic process, which involves the repetition of similar marks over and over and over again. From the micro level of each gridded mark to the macro level of a glance around the room, this exhibition may be more about seriality, among other things, than it is about baseball.

This observation prompts the question: Why baseball players? Does it matter what Gibbs is drawing? The answer, it seems, is both yes and no. By titling each work in this series with the team's home city rather than the player's name, Gibbs draws viewers' attention away from the player's identity to focus on the image. Gibbs' interest in perception leads him to select source images that highlight the photograph's ability to stop time and arrest a fleeting moment. By translating these images into painstaking drawings, he further slows time, taking weeks to finish each one. The viewer, in turn, is invited to take in the whole room or even each image at a glance, but one must come closer to see how Gibbs

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has made the drawings. At that point, the eye gets lost in the image as pure pattern and lingers over each mark, first scanning the drawing, then taking it apart, and finally putting it back together again. "Pictures of Pitchers" presents a paradox: The show may appear pretty bare and of minimal visual interest at first, but like so much minimal art, it is, in fact, all about the pleasure of looking.