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'Waves at Matsushima': Rich art depicting Japanese islands along Tohoku Coast

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'Drawing' at Mateyka

There's an Asian quality to the most interesting work in "[Drawing: L.C. Armstrong, Gene Davis, Jae Ko, Nathan Oliveira, William T. Wiley, Nancy Wolf](#)," a group show of current and former artists in the [Marsha Mateyka Gallery](#)'s stable. Puckishly, Wolf combines Chinese and Indian motifs with the dominant forms of built America. Her "Traffic Circle Mandala" is framed by a black and gray urban canyon, while "Secluded Dwellings in Summer Mountains" sets a rustic peak (in the style of 14th-century Chinese artist Wang Meng) at the center of a snarl of modern highways.

Other pieces, some of which stretch the definition of "drawing," have an Asian-like simplicity. Three ink or pencil sketches by Davis reduce his monumental stripe paintings to wispy suggestions, and two subtle

Oliveira nudes, rendered in charcoal and pinkish-brown watercolor, have the limited palette of a traditional Chinese ink painting.

Although most of this work is on paper, the artists don't restrict themselves to ink and pencil. Armstrong's "Spring Fever" was made by igniting a bomb fuse, which burned a snaky black pattern into painted linen. The piece was then coated with synthetic resin, producing a sheen that suggests surfboards and sports cars. The basic image is simple, but the textures are complex and fascinating.

Korean-born, Tokyo-educated Washington artist Ko has long worked sculpturally with rolls of paper, which she shapes and colors with glue infused with black calligraphy ink. (Lately, she's experimented with brighter hues.) Her three untitled pieces in this show are closely linked to that work, but in an almost-flat format. Paralleling the circular motifs of her three-dimensional style, Ko swirls her black glue-ink mixture on paper, creating patterns that suggest tree rings and the raked gravel of Zen gardens. The technique gives the drawings a chiseled quality, hinting at depths in just a thin layer of sticky pigment. The effect is both tactile and intangible, holding the eye for extended contemplation.