

Adding emphasis to 'Paintings & Works on Paper' at Beth Urdang Gallery

By Cate McQuaid Globe Correspondent, January 4, 2017,
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Margo Margolis, **Red Ears**, flashe on canvas, 72 x 60 inches/Library research

Flying beads of sweat, lines of outrage radiating from heads, and giddy floating hearts: all graphic shorthand for emotion in comics. For anyone like me who grew up reading newspaper funnies and comic books, those little denotations of mood ring as clear as a tuning fork.

Painter Margo Margolis's youngson discovered Italian comic books during time in Rome, and Margolis discovered the percussive, theatrical marks typical of comics — emotive fireworks and lines for motion. Her paintings, drawings, and prints at Beth Urdang Gallery percolate with these gestures. Liberated from their story lines, they make up fields of whirling emphatics.

More Cy Twombly than Roy Lichtenstein, these pieces jump with lines floating through space — along the surface, and distant and deep beneath veils of pigment. Margolis draws them and she transfers images, honoring the printing process of her source material. Occasionally, she adds collage. The real thing tacked on, the transfer, and the drawing — like a voice, its echo, and someone narrating what was said.

Three paintings up to 6 feet high chatter with hash marks, zigzags, and stacked, arcing lines. "Red Ears" revolves around a white "Z" adorned with fractured black hash marks and cute little red domes. Other marks swoop and flow through a smoggy haze. The small flying clusters of stripes behind a red grid and off-center yellow squares in "Red/Yellow" could be traces of old graffiti. Suggestions of time and space play against the gestures' immediacy.

Exclamatory lines swirl like confetti in "One Morning in April," the most aggressively busy of the three. Pale mauve circles vibrate with parentheses-like nested arcs, and Margolis tops

them off with little diagonals like tufts of hair. She collages on sweet tiny flowers and pink spirals.

Her marks grab at you as insistently as a toddler demanding attention. They're like a language made purely of punctuation, rhythmic and emphatic, let out of the duty of modifying sentences, freed at last to express itself alone.

MARGO MARGOLIS:
Paintings & Works
on Paper

At Beth Urdang Gallery, 460 Harrison Ave., through Jan. 14.
781-264-1121, www.bethurdanggallery.com

[Cate McQuaid can be reached at catemcquaid@gmail.com.](mailto:catemcquaid@gmail.com) Follow her on Twitter [@cmcq](https://twitter.com/cmcq).