

Miriam Morsel Nathan

The Washington Post Sunday · 3 Nov 2019 · Miriam Morsel Nathan: Some Piece of the Nature of Things Through Nov. 16 at McLean Project for the Arts, 1234 Ingleside Ave., McLean. style@washpost.com

Fragility and endurance are central themes of Miriam Morsel Nathan's "Some Piece of the Nature of Things," a show of abstract works on paper at McLean Project for the Arts. Paint features in a few of these mostly black-and-white studies of what the Silver Spring artist calls "the landscape of fragmentation." Yet conceptually, the pieces are drawings: wispy, offhand and characterized by spindly lines.



Nathan begins with random markings, which are then extrapolated by intentional additions. Most common are tendrils of ink, occasionally supplemented by charcoal or with lengths of wire that ramble and coil like the drawn lines. Some pictures position areas of yellow watercolor between the lines; the ones that most resemble actual landscapes include blocks of black acrylic that suggest buildings or mountains.

The artist is also a poet, and sometimes her curving lines suggest calligraphy in an unknown language. Her background as a writer may also explain her affinity for paper, which here has metaphorical significance. The material can be manipulated in many ways, she notes, yet "it survives . . . like us."