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A Painter's Prints Trump His Brushstrokes

By Mario Naves

It is a testament to Paul Resika's skills as a print maker that he's able to translate the go-for-broke spontaneity of his paintings into a medium that is, by its very nature, removed from the immediacy of touch. Coursing through Mr. Resika's etchings and monotypes, currently the subject of an exhibition at Lori Bookstein Fine Art, is the artist's unmistakable brushstroke brashly delineating his signature motif: boats on the water. As someone who has long admired Mr. Resika's paintings, I'm surprised by how the prints trump them in terms of grit. Has Mr. Resika ever achieved anything as dolorous as "Boats, Stormy Sea" (1998) when putting brush to canvas? Not that I've seen.

Similarly, the tonal variations in the etchings—velvety grays, distressed blacks, wan silvers—are so varied and rich that one suspects Mr. Resika the colorist prospers most when limited to black and white. To get an idea of how masterful the etchings are, one need look no further than the monotypes, which approximate the paintings and seem a lot more indulgent for it. (Mr. Resika, to his credit, remains suspicious of the slippery satisfactions of that medium.) The centerpiece is "Still Boats and Moon" (2001), but "Boats at the Pier" (2001) and "Little Boats I" (2001) are the highlights. The former is gutsy, the latter's a honey, and in between Mr. Resika works with a freedom and a surely most artists only dream of.