

THE BOSTON GLOBE

FRIDAY, JUNE 3, 2005

Touch and tone

Kate Shepherd's rigorous paintings at Barbara Krakow Gallery parse art. They incorporate drawing, painting, and sculpture, abstraction and representation, highlighting each element while bringing them all together as a whole.

Shepherd paints on wood, which she also bevels and shapes as a sculptor might. The enamel paint goes on in sanded-down layers, resulting in clean, smooth, monochrome passages, which she then draws over with delicate lines in oil paint. The lines have a graphic-illustration quality, and she uses the same vocabulary of symbols over and over: a sun's radiating lines, a stack of blocks, or a chicken-wire-like network suggesting light on water.

Kate Shepherd: Puzzles, Cards, and Blocks

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery, 10 Newbury St., through June 14.

617-262-4490. www.barbarakrakowgallery.com

Shepherd's delicate touch and attention to tone bring a dizzy sense of romance to works that might verge on the mechanical. "Big Moon Violent, Reflection" is a luscious piece, with the circle of a moon carved out at the center and painted violet, hanging in a gray-blue sky. A bevel slices through at the horizon line over a deep blue sea, which pulses with that spindly web of white painted lines. Shepherd gathers many polarities into her embrace to create works that have elegance and clarity, but an underpinning of mystery.