

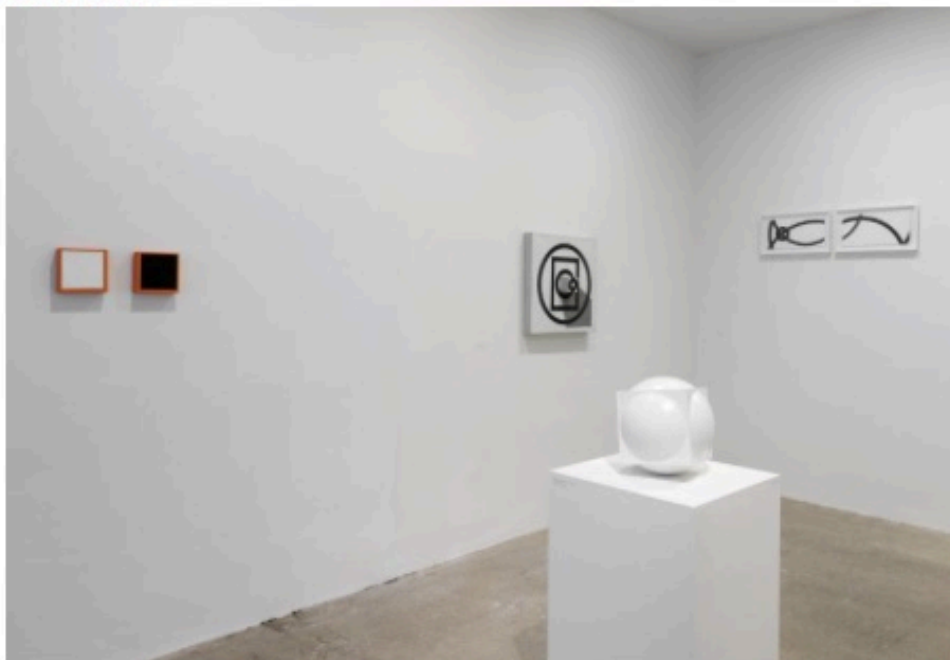
Alex Borkowski, 'Channa Horwitz', This is Tomorrow (published online), 20 April 2016

this is tomorrow

Contemporary Art Magazine

Raven Row, 56 Artillery Ln, London E1 7LS

Channa Horwitz



Title : Exhibition view Channa Horwitz, Works from the series Sonakinatography, 1970-2011

Website : <http://www.ravenrow.org/>

Credit : Courtesy Estate of Channa Horwitz. Photograph by Marcus J. Leith



Channa Horwitz

Raven Row

10 March - 1 May 2016

Review by Alex Borkowski

Throughout her artistic career, which spanned more than five decades, Channa Horwitz consistently produced works based upon the number eight. The exhibition of her work at Raven Row, the first large institutional show in the UK of her extraordinary drawings, thus acts as a testament to a lifelong fixation.

Having attended CalArts in the early 1970s, Horwitz's practice is most readily aligned with American minimal and conceptual artists such as Sol LeWitt. Her unwavering devotion to mathematical and serial composition techniques, and their transposition outside the picture plane, however, also bears similarities to theories of modernist music. Her desire to create 'a separate world of visual rhythm that would be equally valid in every art form' resonates with composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's concept of serialism, which he described in 1973 as 'something that's come into our conscience and will be there forever ... It's a spiritual and democratic attitude toward the world. The stars are organised in a serial way.'

The exhibition takes as its focal point two series – 'Language Series' (1964-2011) and 'Sonakinatography' (1968-2011) - which Horwitz returned to throughout her life, adding variations to create inexhaustible puzzles. 'Language Series' consists of black squares and rectangles on an orange grid arranged according to predefined rules. The different iterations of this series are represented through a selection of drawings, paintings and the reconstruction of 'Displacement' (2011), which manifests the grid and blocks on a

human, three-dimensional scale. Visitors are invited to activate the artwork through semi-weekly yoga sessions within the grid, as participants alternate between rearranging the blocks and taking asanas in their individual, anthropic squares.

The second and more cryptic series is 'Sonakinatography', which consists of twenty-three programmatic compositions. Horwitz developed an elaborate form of notation that compresses eight instructions pertaining to movement, sound and duration into a single visual beat. The results are exceedingly intricate scores on graph paper, with numbered rows and individual units filled in in a palette of vibrant colours which remained consistent throughout the series. Some compositions, when viewed at a slight remove from the busy surface, reveal overarching shapes and patterns, while others remain abstruse constellations of tiny coloured squares. A programme of accompanying events at Raven Row included two choreographic interpretations of compositions from the 'Sonakinatography' series by Horwitz' daughter Ellen Davis, musical arrangements by Sarah Angliss and Maria Moraru, and a multi-media interpretation by Mark Fell.

For most visitors to the gallery, however, Horwitz's elaborate scores remain indecipherable. Two early works elucidate Horwitz' intentions for the manifestation of her drawings in other media: 'Suspension of Vertical Beams' (1968), is an unrealised proposal for an installation of eight illuminated beams and instructs how each object would move in rhythm with the others; 'Movements' (1968/69), a precursor to 'Sonakinatography', includes an instructional key which associates columns and colours with different instruments, pitches and intensities. But there is still a great deal of visual pleasure to be drawn from Horwitz's drawings as art objects in and of themselves. Her works from the 1980s experiment with angled vectors and colour, creating dense, vibrating matrixes. Perhaps the most astonishing work is 'Canon' (1987), which employs a simple repetition of incrementally curved lines to produce patterns that are ornate to the point of noise.

Horwitz is miraculous in her precision and brings to light the unique alchemy of the grid.

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