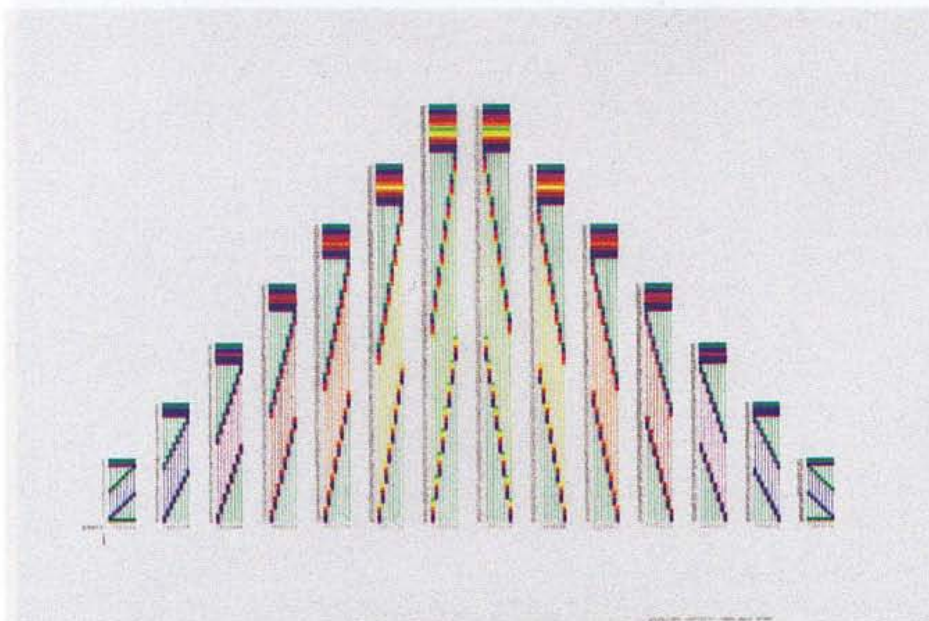


Channa Horwitz

RAVEN ROW

Channa Horwitz was, notoriously, the only woman selected for Maurice Tuchman's landmark Art and Technology project (1967–71) and, worse still, was the only selected artist not to have her work realized and exhibited. A diagram on graph paper for the movement of light on eight Plexiglas beams floating in a magnetic field, *Art and Technology Proposal: Beams and Intensity of Lights*, 1968, was on view in this long-overdue survey, which originated at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin and was organized by its chief curator, Ellen Blumenstein. Although the proposal never took on concrete form, it was prescient in that systems, motion, diagramming, and the count from one to eight would consume the attention of the Los Angeles-born and -based artist until her death in 2013.

Covering a period from 1964 to 2012, the exhibition comprised primarily works on Mylar or paper but also a handful of paintings and sculptures, as well as an interactive installation, *Displacement*, 2011. Her two main series of work, "Language," 1964–2011, and "Sonakinatography," 1968–2012, are both diagrammatic systems. Both groups were installed on the ground floor, together with her earlier paintings and *Displacement*, while the upper galleries were devoted to other drawings and Art and Technology-related work. "Language" uses black and white circles and squares as a coding method. "I chose the circle and the square," the artist said, "to represent all shapes, and black and white to present all colors." Each resulting pictogram has squares intersecting with circles on an orange grid. They may suggest signal flags designed by a Minimalist. *Language Series I*, 1964–2004, collects twenty-one individual pictograms laid out in a triangular formation within its frame. With a small key at the bottom-right corner, it is possible to slowly decipher the piece, but even without this reading, the grouping's pulsing sequential geometric rhythm equally holds one's attention.



Channa Horwitz,
Sonakinatography,
Composition XVII,
1987–2004, casein
on Mylar, 24 × 35".
From the series
"Sonakinatography,"
1968–2012.

If “Language” offers a structural view of symbolic communication, then the more labor-intensive “Sonakinatography”—its title derived from the Greek words for “sound,” “movement,” and “notation”—can be described as a kind of optical score. It is, Horwitz said, a “system of notation” such that the “compositions are logical structures for planned, programmed movement in time.” For instance, in the least complex of these pieces here (and one of the earliest), *Time Structure Composition III, Sonakinatography I*, 1970, eight vertical colored lines are bundled into three columns. Each color represents an instrument or performer, and the lines connect squares denoting events. These actions are counted, beginning with one at the bottom and reaching 168 at top right. The work, like many of those that followed, was handmade with casein paint on Mylar graph paper—another structuring element.

As meticulous as her results might be, and as esoteric as the diagrams appear, the overall experience is both dizzyingly intense and visually engaging. In the later “Sonakinatography” pieces, Horwitz’s diagrams spiral into increasingly complex and beautiful forms. They recall Mark Lombardi’s mapping of political capital and conspiracy, informative but also delicate and sensitive. Like those of her Southern California contemporaries Robert Irwin, John Baldessari, and James Turrell, Horwitz’s interests were in cerebral and perceptual processes rather than personal expression, but she also drew in the performative. In Blumenstein’s view, Horwitz’s “central concern was to grapple with space and time as an indivisible unity.” Despite their functional nature, when translated into drawings her measures dance.

—*Sherman Sam*