

Counting Out Of Time: Channa Horwitz's Retrospective at KW

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Channa Horwitz COUNTING IN EIGHT, MOVING BY COLOR copyright 2011 Photo by Ellen Davis

The late Channa Horwitz (1932-2013) was an artist of contrasts. She used self-imposed mathematically-based rules to make abstract art, which, despite seeming restrictive was quasi-rebellious in the male-dominated Minimalism of the 60s. Her logical sequences translated mostly into hand-drawn geometrical shapes but had the potential to transform into live performances.

Presenting her work is not a straightforward task: on the one hand her schemata has to be explained, on the other precision moves the work away from abstraction. Many of the artist's sequences were also never materialised, which adds to the curatorial conundrum. KW's curator Ellen Blumenstein opted for a circumspect chronological introduction to Horwitz's oeuvre, which is on show from March 15.

The first rooms present the "Language Series", (1964-2011), in which the artist explored art works with the basic geometrical forms of the circle, square and rectangle, by using a predefined key that determined their form. "A restriction

on the possibilities gives strength,” the artist said in 2009. The following room shows the artist’s study of the relationship between circle and square in a series of black-and-white paintings, that involved the canvas’s edges in the concept of their form. “Circles On A Cube”, (1968-2011) has, therefore, the capacity to be either a painting or a sculpture hanging on the wall.



Channa Horwitz, *COUNTING IN EIGHT, MOVING BY COLOR, SONAKINATOGRAPHY COMPOSITION XXII*, Tusche und Plakafarbe auf Grafik-Mylar / Chinese ink and Plaka color on Graphic Mylar 56 x 71 cm Courtesy Sammlung Oehmen, Deutschland / Courtesy Oehmen Collection, Germany, copyright 2001, Channa Horwitz

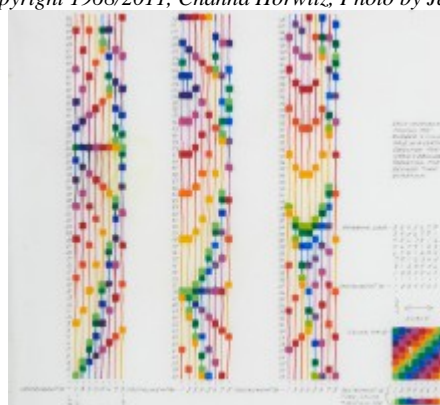
In “Sonakinatography”(1968-2012) (sound, motion and notation), her main series, she developed a system of depicting movement as notations – both of bodies and objects in space, and of the voice and sound overtime. With the aid of graphic units the artist designed structures, comprised of compositions in manifold variations that could translate spatio-temporal relations into drawings or paintings resembling Op Art. Their beauty lies on the opposition between logical rigour and hand-drawn imperfections. However, the power in the series is that each drawing has the potential to be presented as a performance, concert or transformed into a spatial installation. The promise of this potential lingers throughout the whole exhibition: only photographs from the silent movie (“At the Tone the Time will be”, 1969) are projected, which meant it lacked informative context. To fill the void the KW team recreated some of Horwitz’s sequences: they programmed the front-window blinds to slide up and down, and rebuilt “Breather”, (1968/2005), the small sculpture in the form of a silver balloon that inflates and deflates itself.

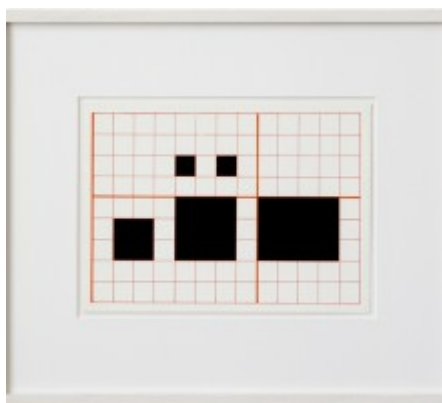
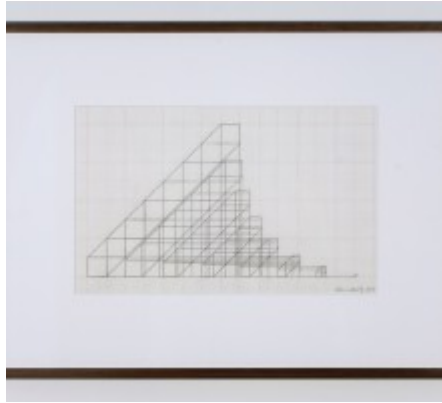
More drawings of the same series hang in the rooms leading to the main hall adding to the anticipation for the transformation of these works. One of the walls shows large-scale compositions painted by the artist and by KW’s team. Eight coloured geometrical forms stand next to each other in what is yet another two-dimensional representation, although the artist’s matrix has the potential to be performed in any medium. Also not present was “Poem Opera”, (1978/2012), Channa Horwitz’s collaboration with dancers, percussionists, and electronic musicians using her Sonakinatography works,

which would have completed the artist's concepts. KW has indeed planned two live performances but will that be enough if they're not a permanent feature of the exhibition? Despite the artist only achieving wide visibility in her later years (New Museum, NY in 2012 and Venice Biennale in 2013) she never quit working. "I knew that my art was important," she once said. "Because it is honest."



*Channa Horwitz, COUNTING IN EIGHT, MOVING BY COLOR, CIRCLES ON A CUBE, Lack auf Holz / Varnish on wood 40 x 40 x 40 cm
Courtesy Nachlass Channa Horwitz und François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles / Courtesy Estate Channa Horwitz and François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles, copyright 1968/2011, Channa Horwitz, Photo by Jan Brockhaus*







Text by [William Paz](#)

Channa Horwitz, *Counting in Eight, Moving By Colour* is on show at the KW Institute for Contemporary Art from 15 March until 25 May 2015

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