

ArtReview

Figure 8

Clifton Benevento, New York 26 June – 7 August

The work of Channa Horwitz (1932–2013) revolved around systems and notation. The codes she devised mimic the languages of music and mathematics (indeed, some of her compositions were designed for use by musicians and dancers). In their final sum, the works appeal to the eye with visible rhythm and intense repetition, accumulating lines and colours to compose a fine mesh of marks or unusual shapes generated by a specific iterative logic. A single drawing in this exhibition, *Movement # 11 Sheet A* (1969), is a modest testimony to ‘Sonakinatography’ – the code Horwitz devised, based on the numbers one to eight, for writing down time, rhythm and movement (each allocated to different elements of a composition) on eight-to-the-inch graph paper. In it, precise thought is given form and their mutual satisfaction gives rise to Horwitz’s unique aesthetic.

Figure 8 borrows from this system, assembling eight works by eight artists who are working with different forms of ‘writing’ and its transference into material. To lead with language in this way (however broadly) breaks from the raft

of gestural abstract painting now prevalent in New York and whose messiah, Albert Oehlen, has a concurrent solo show at the New Museum. The works at Clifton Benevento are thoroughly without gesture: the artists’ hands are all but invisible.

Noticeable in the context of Horwitz’s oeuvre is the involvement of electronic computation in the works of these contemporary artists. A video work by Siebren Versteeg entitled *BOOM (Fresher Accenti)* (2007), uses a program to grab pictures from random Google searches and insert them into a loop of an offering hand. For *Intersecting the Values of Hue and Brightness* (2015), Joshua Citarella produced technicolour vinyl sheaths whose gradients are generated according to coordinates of the gallery’s architecture. The other highly coloured work in the show, something of a painting-by-numbers work by Mariah Dekkenga (*Untitled*, 2015), translates compositions from Adobe Illustrator by hand into paint on canvas.

Next to these colourific surfaces are more sculptural pieces by Zarouhie Abdalian, who has assembled seven piano keys on the wall for

Every Instance (C#/D♭) (2014), and Luis Miguel Bendaña, who traps a tangle of vhs tape beneath blue netting in *Tears of a Pig* (2015). Mike Yaniro has carved out letters and numbers from a blue PVC sheet and painted them in white. Something of an anomaly, *Mailed Painting 168* (2015) by Karin Sander is nothing but a primed canvas bearing the marks of its unprotected transit from Berlin to New York.

These works offer various artistic relations between media and music, illustration, transportation, image circulation and architecture. Unwittingly perhaps, the show in part recounts the disappearance of physical supports for data and the prominence of electronic analysis. Gone is the combination of functionality and great labour in Horwitz’s notations, with visual art as the transcendent outcome; in its place are swifter visible results, the final sum of which might be purely decorative. Where these works lack a certain power, collectively they approach the question of where paths through art and information might begin today.

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