

Group exhibition

Gridscape

8 July
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Press Release

Featuring the work of ten artists and spanning a period of forty-five years, *Gridscape* explores how artists use systems and structures to free expression. The exhibition brings together different generations of artists who have approached one of the defining questions of Modernism: how can systems be used to investigate, contain or liberate the self?

The confrontation between regimentation and chaos, rules and imagination, limits and freedom has given birth to some of the most fascinating artworks of the twentieth century. Taking this as a starting point, *Gridscape* presents the work of artists who have continued to use and challenge systems as a way of expressing the complex relationships that unite the collective and the individual, or the inner and outside worlds. Grids often represent an attempt to rationalise things that are vast, capricious and almost impossible to control, such as language, memory and time. The latter two concepts come to the fore, for example, in the work of On Kawara (1932–2014) and McArthur Binion (b. 1946). While Binion's paintings take the form of grids layered over a substrate of personal photographs, documents and pages from a two-decade old address book, Kawara worked on his Today series for more than fifty years: monochromatic canvases in red, blue, or grey that record the date of their creation. The artist toiled for hours on each piece and always followed a strict protocol. If a 'date' wasn't finished on the same day, it was destroyed. Whereas Kawara sought to arrest a single moment of time in an almost forensic and neutral way, Binion imposes a framework upon a lifetime of vivid memories.

Roni Horn's (b. 1955) *Remembered Words* is a group of nine framed drawings in a grid formation. They contain rows and columns of hand-painted coloured circles: organic, fluid and luminous, replete with gradations and nuances. While some sheets just contain spheres, others link colours with words. These enigmatic, intriguing and apparently random notations challenge the viewer to try and extract the hidden connections or even impose their own. Colour and language also converge in Alighiero Boetti's (1940–1994) *arazzi* [tapestries], Made during the 1980s and 90s in Peshawar, they reflect the artists abiding interest in Afghan culture. While Boetti created the designs and messages, the embroiderers were free to select the colour schemes – thus introducing an element of chance. *Quando le parole sono stanche* [When Words are Tired] combines Italian and Persian texts, with the angular Roman alphabet forming an intriguing counterpoint to the flowing Arabic script of Farsi. The tessellated mosaic of capital letters, coupled with the difficulty of deciphering the statement, only serves to underscore the contrast between order and disorder.

Grids and underlying patterns are no less fascinating to a younger generation of artists. Matt Connors (b. 1973), for example, employs a lattice device as a graphic element in *Untitled* (2020), while Rachel Eulena Williams (b. 1991) often uses rope as a structuring tool which she uses to frame moments of gestural expression. Speaking about works such as *In the Hour Before Snow* (2021), she says: 'Some of the ropes are from hammocks, and I began using them for their grid structure, which creates a great point system for framing the work. I also like how much it is associated with the body.' The exhibition's middle room presents works by Andy Robert (b. 1984), whose practice confronts the historical context of painting with the biographical, the social. Painted en plein air during a recent trip to Puerto Rico, silver-toned planes of textured colour feel indexical in their arrangement, as though the artist was

revealing an uncertain geography. Small sculptural self-portraits are composed of screws and the artist's hair. Seemingly similar, their differences are anecdotal and personal– the process of repetition as a subjective gesture.

Gridscape also points us towards expansiveness and to what might lie beyond the artwork. For as Rosalind Krauss explains in her seminal essay *Grids* (1979): 'Logically speaking, the grid extends, in all directions, to infinity. Any boundaries imposed upon it by a given painting or sculpture can only be seen according to this logic as arbitrary. By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as a mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric. Thus, the grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame.'

With works by Agnes Martin (1912–2004), On Kawara (1932–2014), Alighiero Boetti (1940–1994), McArthur Binion (b. 1946), Sherrie Levine (b. 1947), Thierry De Cordier (b. 1954), Roni Horn (b. 1955), Matt Connors (b. 1973), Andy Robert (b. 1984) and Rachel Eulena Williams (b. 1991).

Artist biographies available via www.xavierhufkens.com

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