In Geometric Etchings and Drawings, Linda Karshan Finds Her Rhythm

In “Signs of Men,” a solo exhibition at Brooklyn’s ART 3 gallery, Linda Karshan presents work from the past 20 years, including two new suites of etchings and drawings based on her unique, rhythm-based art practice. Karshan’s geometric images are rooted in a careful study of movement, both bodily and linear. Their method of execution is as vital to her practice as the images themselves.

As part of the programming for the exhibition, Dr. Mark McDonald, the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Curator of Prints, will speak with the artist at a public event on March 29th. Karshan’s work is manifested as spare line drawings, but her methodology spans disciplines, including performance, dance, and psychology.

Karshan’s drawings are executed in charcoal on paper, in freehand, most often comprised of geometric patterns that dance with the interplay of continuation and cessation. For example, *Summer Drawings 2014, II 11&13/8/14* (2014) features a diamond shape within a rectangular border. The border is interrupted by empty space at the corners and at the points where it would intersect with the tips of the diamond. The interior of the diamond is divided by one horizontal line spanning its entire width. A pattern of repeated horizontal, vertical, and diagonal parallel lines creates an area of crosshatching in the interior, though on the top half, the sides along the center vertical axis are mismatched and do not quite meet. Karshan has said that she is “after the most perfect line,” though without mechanical aid, resulting in drawings that are both precise and yet also buoyant and exciting in the imperfections of their handcrafted nature.
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Similar diamond patterns recur in works such as *Footfalls, 23/6 III, Summer Drawings 2014 I 18/7/14,* and *Summer Drawings 2014, II 6/8/14* (all 2014). In each one, slight alterations are made to the intersection and framing of the form. The precision of Karshan’s lines requires steadiness and grace, and while drawing, she uses concise and careful, dance-like movements. This poetic relationship to the body is recapitulated both in a video of the artist at work by Candida Richardson, called *Movements, and their Images* (2009), and by Karshan’s 2014 series “Footfalls” and “Summer Drawings.”

Earlier works by Karshan, such as *Open Form* (2005), share affinities with early works by Brice Marden and to the work of painters such as Suzan Frecon, in their use of exceptionally spare forms to suggest emotional, psychological, and aesthetic ideas. A few of Karshan’s works from the 1990s are also on view, including the diptych *Untitled I and Untitled II (Nov. & Dec. 1997)* (1997), works with small gestural lines accumulating into dense clouds, which when contrasted with more recent works, show her evolution from a similarly dance-related movement. Karshannedazzes beautifully between restriction and freedom, creating minimalist grids, rectangles, and circles full of grace and warm vivacity.

— Stephen Dillon

“*Linda Karshan: Signs of Men*” is on view at ART 3, Brooklyn, Mar. 11–Apr. 5, 2015.

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