

Press Release

Hanne Darboven

Six Books on 1968

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Sprüth Magers, Los Angeles

Sprüth Magers

Widely acknowledged as one of conceptual art's founding artists, and a rare woman amid that canon, Hanne Darboven offered a unique and fascinating voice in the turn to structural systems in the art of the late 1960s onward. At the Los Angeles gallery, Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to present the West Coast premiere of the artist's first film work, *Six Books on 1968* (1969), a groundbreaking installation that is key to grasping Darboven's overall process and artistic ethos.

After studying painting at Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, in 1966 Darboven moved to New York, where she quickly entered conceptual art circles and befriended Sol LeWitt, On Kawara and Joseph Kosuth, among others. By the time she returned to Hamburg in 1968, she had developed her *Konstruktionen* (constructions), a method of translating time into handwritten, systematic calculations on graph paper that was a major structuring component of her subsequent works. Taking the first day of January 1968, for instance, the artist breaks down the calendar date 1/1/68 into 1 + 1 + 6 + 8; the resulting 16, often followed by the notation "K," or "K-value," serves as a shorthand for the date, or "Konstruktionen," respectively. Darboven's calculations chart the time that passes over days, months and years, and thereby convert time from its usual continuous flow into methodical computations divorced from the nuances and narratives of lived time.

Six Books on 1968 was Darboven's first major work to deploy this method of marking time. Across six voluminous books, she presented six different ways to calculate and thus "depict" the year 1968, each circumscribed physically and conceptually by the grid of the graph paper. The artist's handwriting unifies the project visually, bringing order and logic to what was a decidedly disordered and difficult year: the murders of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy in the United States; the Tet Offensive during the Vietnam War; the rise, and fall, of the Prague Spring; the West German student movement and the May '68 protests in Paris and around the world. Darboven does not ask us to forget these events, but rather to surrender to a different, unifying form of perception. The work was included early on in several international exhibitions, including *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, famously curated by Harald Szeemann at Kunsthalle Bern in 1969.

With assistance from the German media artist Claus Böhmler, Darboven soon translated this project into film, producing the six-channel, cinematic rendering of *Six*

Books on 1968 (1969) on view in this exhibition. First realized for an exhibition at Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach in 1969 (today Museum Abteiberg), the work utilizes six 16mm projectors, each of which display the consecutive pages of one of the six books, pulsing to a black screen between each page like the beat of a metronome or strobe light. Darboven's calculations flash momentarily before our eyes as we attempt to discern their logic and progression.

Yet the result is not merely a documentation of the books. Rather, Darboven devised additional computational systems in the move from paper to celluloid that repeat certain pages and determine new patterns of viewing. The overall experience of the project, moreover, is heightened sensorially through the darkened cinematic space and the whirring of the analog projectors. Since each film is slightly different in length (approximately fifteen minutes each), the synching of the six films changes continually. Each visitor's experience is therefore unique and specific to the moment in time in which they enter the space. This presentation of the film is the first in decades to bring it to life in its original 16mm format, rather than through digital projections.

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In the 1970s, Darboven began to integrate other types of elements into her works and constructions, including texts by Goethe and Sartre, photographs, postcards and magazine covers, as well as three-dimensional objects. *Six Books on 1968* bears witness to the origins that made the rest of this work possible, and it provides an experiential view into her investigations of time – in a form that is itself overtly time-based – to bring audiences closer to understanding her idiosyncratic, systematic and ultimately beautiful vision of the world.

Hanne Darboven (1941–2009). Selected solo exhibitions include Kunsthalle Bern (1969), Westfälischer Kunstverein, Muenster (1971), Kunstmuseum Basel (1974), Deichtorhallen Hamburg (1991), Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (both 1986), Dia Center for the Arts, New York (1996), Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (1997), Hamburger Kunsthalle (1999 and 2006), and Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin (2006), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2014), Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn and Haus der Kunst, Munich (both 2015), Deichtorhallen, Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg and Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (both 2017). Selected group shows include documenta, Kassel (1972, 1977, 1982, 2002), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1970, 1981, 1989, 2000, 2006), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1971, 1983), Museum of Modern Art, New York (1976, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2014, 2017, 2018), National Museum of Art, Osaka (1989), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (1991), The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (1994), Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1996), Haus der Kunst, Munich (1997, 2003, 2008), Museum für Moderne Kunst MMK, Frankfurt (2000, 2010), Centre Pompidou, Paris (2002), Hamburger Kunsthalle (2013, 2016), Kunstmuseum Basel (2014), ICA Miami (2017), Westbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2019) and Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2020). She represented the Federal Republic of Germany at the 1982 Venice Biennale (along with Gotthard Graubner and Wolfgang Laib).

For further information and press inquiries, please contact Claire Rifelj (claire@spruethmagers.com).