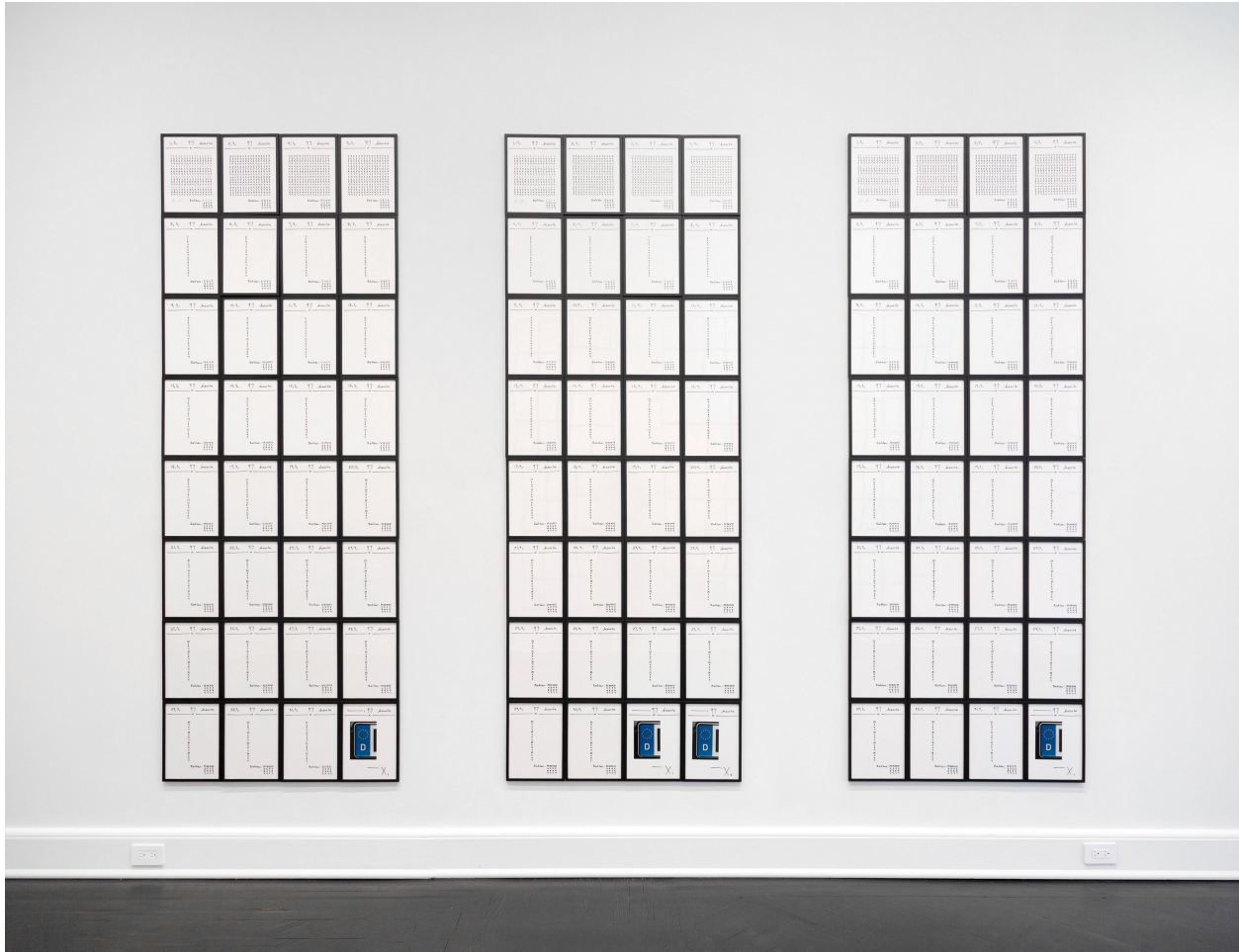


Petzel

Paige K. Bradley, "Hanne Darboven: Europa 97," *TheGuide.art*, May 5, 2021.

THEGUIDE.ART



Hanne Darboven
Europa 97

May 4th — Jun 19th
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Petzel
35 E 67th Street

New York
Upper East Side

Postcards, old magazine covers, shabby manikins, pages of text re-typed from an encyclopedia, cursive handwriting—such are the tools the post-war German conceptual artist Hanne Darboven deployed over the course of decades. Though she spent only two years in New York in the late 1960s, her predilection for meticulous cataloguing, collecting, and recording resulted in a towering body of work that can be contextually grounded in developments in American art, while also standing alone as a fortress-like meditation on time and history. Petzel's first solo exhibition of her work, in collaboration with Sprüth Magers, is devoted to a single piece titled *Europa 97*, an assembly of 384 individual pages of felt pen and collaged color photographs on tracing paper documenting the artist's daily calculations for the entire year of 1997.

Petzel

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Darboven once said, “I write with numbers, I count with words.” In a move characteristic of her style—which one could call logical, and yet with such a word one might question in what sense the relentless systems of seemingly quotidian information she made are *reasonable*—the work is segmented into twelve blocks each representative of the months of the year, each comprising thirty-two pages.

Why thirty-two? It’s 384 divided by twelve. Numerology is popular these days among those desperate for meaning, but Darboven’s work, in all its mathematical precision, is both self-evident and crushingly distant. Two things can be true at once, such as that Darboven’s prosperous family business supplied Nazi Germany with a favored coffee ground, while the artist also created in her monumental installation *Kulturgeschichte 1880-1983* (1980–83) what is likely one of the most slow-burn monuments to the impossibility of truly representing history.

Europa 97 alludes to an official logging of data—just the facts orderly laid out—and applies a no-nonsense, even bureaucratic approach to problems of errant information. Pages that don’t fit the calculus of a given month’s number of days are completed by adding photos of the blue seal of Europe, such as those seen stamped onto license plates. And that’s not all: 1997 was declared the “European Year against Racism and Xenophobia” by the EU, but one assignation in a series of annual dedications since 1983 to a theme around which outreach work and program funding could be allied. Since a version of *Europa 97* also hangs in Angela Merkel’s party’s lobby and press room of the German Bundestag, Conceptualism and government-certified attempts at meaning-making may well be held in tension, or as compliments to each other, in this work.

Proclaiming an intention for a year, an arbitrary designation of time, is as perfectly normal as saying, “I’m glad 2020 is over!” If only endings were possible. Math is also logical, and therefore associated with the factual, the realm of what can be proven. Does having more data necessarily equal more truth though? See the show, and what sum you can make of its letters. —
Paige K. Bradley

Installation view, Hanne Darboven, *Europa 97*, 1998. Pancolor felt pen and collaged color photographs on tracing paper, 384 sheets, 11.75 x 8.5 inches (each). Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York.

<https://theguide.art/event/hanne-darboven-europa-97-petzel/>