

Petzel

Jason Farago, "4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2021.

The New York Times

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Hassan Hajjaj's "My Rockstars"; Hanne Darboven's matrix of digits; Patty Chang's list of fears; and Rachel Rossin's painting-projection blends.

Hanne Darboven

Through June 19. Petzel, 35 East 67 Street, Manhattan. 212-680-9467; petzel.com.



Installation view of "Hanne Darboven: Europa 97" (1998), which comprises 384 sheets of paper. Hanne Darboven and Petzel

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Though her works on paper often drew on rules and repetitions, and though she enjoyed a close friendship with Sol LeWitt during her years in New York, the German artist and composer Hanne Darboven (1941-2009) never quite fit the art academies’ intractable designation of “conceptual artist.” Her rambling, rhythmic installations of scribbles and calculations, accompanied by photographs and objects and often filling entire rooms, have as much human imperfection as mathematical accuracy — and can take on an epic grandeur as they accumulate historical and personal detail.

Five years after the Dia Art Foundation presented her magnum opus, “[Kulturgeschichte 1880-1983](#),” New Yorkers can rediscover Darboven’s art at Petzel, which has filled the parlor floor of its uptown gallery with the installation “Europa 97,” made from 384 sheets of paper. On each day of 1997, Darboven headed a page with the date and the word “today.” Beneath, she repeated the digits of the day, month, and year; she usually wrote the numbers out in a single column, but at the start of each month she filled the page with a matrix of digits. When completed, each month’s drawings were arranged into a 4 x 8 grid, with the leftover spaces filled by a photograph of a German license plate — zoomed, notably, onto the blue-and-yellow European flag at the plate’s left.

From the title onward, Darboven analogizes the advancing numbers of “Europa 97” to another kind of progress: Pan-European democracy, five years on from the founding of the European Union in Maastricht. But this work never illustrates the year’s events or tips its political hand. On May 2, Tony Blair took power in Britain after 18 years of Conservative rule; Darboven simply recorded the date and repeated its digits. In early July, intense rainfall led to flooding across Poland and the Czech Republic; Darboven recorded the date, repeated its digits. The year 1997 could have been as dramatic as 1789 or as forgettable as, I don’t know, 1372. It doesn’t matter. This is an ahistoric look at history; it’s not the events that matter here, but the ideals.

In other projects, Darboven computed sums from a given date’s month, day and year, adding their digits together in a habitual, meditative personal arithmetic. But nothing is being calculated in “Europa 97.” She just writes the word “numbers,” and lets them keep ticking up: 10 4 9 7, 11 4 9 7, 12 4 9 7. ... All that’s pictured is a humanist ideal — a promise she tried to embody in art, and saw embodied too in those yellow stars on a blue background.

JASON FARAGO

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/13/arts/design/4-art-gallery-shows-to-see-right-now.html>