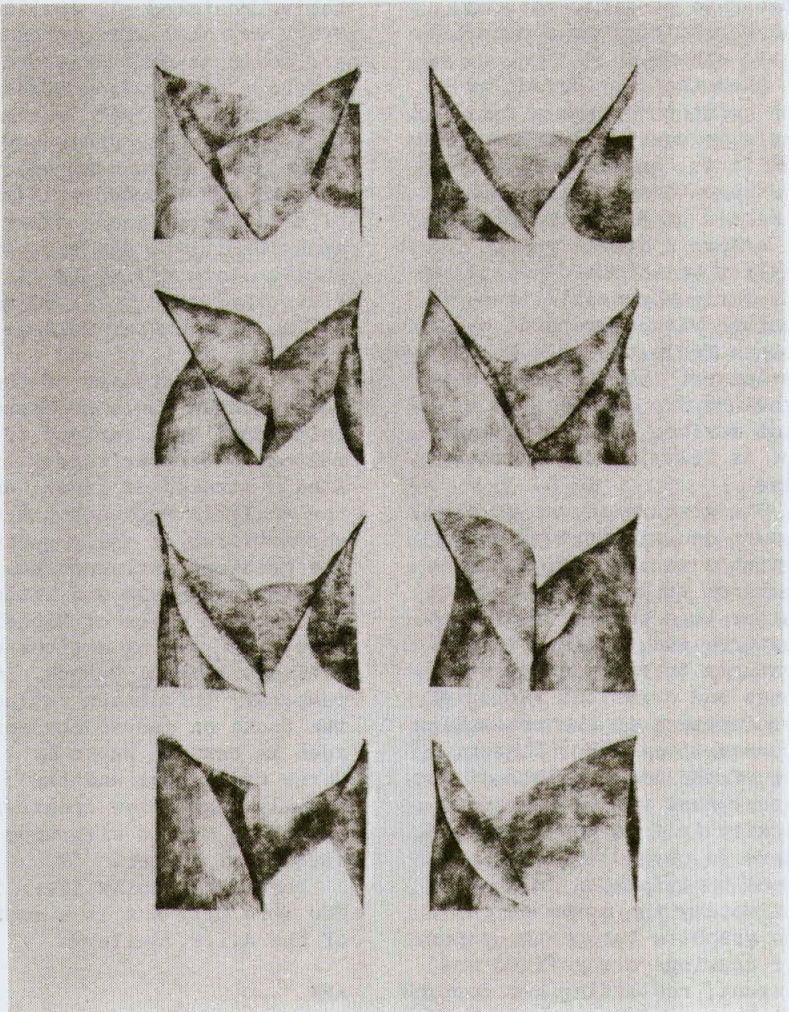


Motion Touching Five Points, 1973



Blythe Bohnen's work embodies a rich and puzzling paradox. In the context of a highly self-disciplined structure, Bohnen pursues her interests in simplification and restraint, motion and form. And from this rigorously intellectual pursuit emerge drawings of great sensuality.

Bohnen's stringent restrictions (discussed in her statement on the opposite page) are clearly manifest in the seven works shown in MATRIX through the artist's use of a grid, her allowance for only a limited number of possible motions, and her holding to a monochromatic scheme.

Over the past decade or so the grid has become a familiar artistic convention. For Bohnen it is, quite simply, one convenient way of organizing a series of discrete motions. It offers a stable ground against which she can explore the various possibilities of gesture with a graphite bar. Bohnen feels the grid helps her assert the fact that her drawings are markings on a flat surface - just that and not an illusion of something else.

The gesture is one of the common denominators of an artist's vocabulary. Bohnen's decision to limit her subject matter to a series of discrete gestures and to limit these gestures to certain angles, tones and durations reflects her interest in the art-making process itself. For Bohnen, one of the many artists of the recent past who eschew complexity in favor of reduction, there is obviously great personal satisfaction in knowing intimately the movement of the graphite bar on the paper. Her drawings are refined and elegant, reflecting her command of the materials she uses.

Bohnen's works are monochromatic for a number of reasons. She feels that color would

distract from the issues she is exploring and that works in black and white stand apart from the world around them. And Bohnen has strong recollections from her childhood - of white sheets hanging on the clothes line blowing in the wind and of falling asleep at night fascinated with the sight outside her window, rustling branches of leaves illuminated from behind by a street light.

Bohnen was born in Evanston, Illinois in 1940. She was an art history major at Smith College where she recalls having resisted all post-Renaissance courses. After graduation she moved to Cambridge and received a B.F.A. from Boston University. In 1967, she moved to New York City where she joined the Education Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. There, among other responsibilities, she delivered public lectures on "The Artist's Viewpoint". She received an M.F.A. from Hunter College in 1972.

An ardent student of the past, Bohnen feels profoundly influenced by a variety of masters - Vermeer's grey light, Klee's studies of lines, and the analytic approach and monochromaticism of early cubism. The greatest influence has come from Michelangelo and Titian - the twisted nudes of Michelangelo, the rolling motions of Titian's Rape of Europa. Contemporary influences include the focus on sparse movement seen in certain works by Merce Cunningham and the totally innovative creativity of Robert Morris with whom she studied at Hunter.

Bohnen currently lives in New York City and is a member of the A.I.R. Gallery.

AMK

Works in MATRIX:

Motion Touching Four Points with Graphite Stick, 1973, graphite on paper, 28" x 22".

Motion Touching Five Points with Graphite Stick, 1973, graphite on paper, 28" x 22".

Motion Touching Two Points with Graphite Stick, 1974, graphite on paper, 45" x 35".

Two Motions with Graphite Stick, 1974, graphite on paper, 28" x 22".

One Motion with Graphite Stick, Horizontal and Vertical, 1974, graphite on paper, 28" x 22".

Motion Touching Two Points with Graphite Stick, 1974, graphite on paper, 28" x 22".

Motion Touching Four Points with Graphite Stick: Separating Parts, Dark and Light, 1975, graphite on paper, 45" x 35".

I am interested in the forms that result from a kinesthetic reaction to a given situation. Similar motions in different media are translated into a variety of forms.

A single line, a system of points, or a grid define a repeated set of limits that narrows the possibilities for motion so it can be studied.

The structure of the form reflects the motions possible for humans: the straight push-pull of the hinge joint and the curves from pivots around a fixed point, or in motion. Shifts in pressure as body balance is upset and regained are recorded as tone changes.

I add together the basic units of single motions or analyze complex forms into their component parts.

I have worked with acrylic brushstrokes on canvas. The works in MATRIX utilize graphite bars moved on their edges. Factors that are varied from work to work are tone (pressure on the graphite) and size (duration of the motion) and the angle at which the graphite is moved from a point. In these works I assume four tone-pressure values (light, middle, dark and gradated) and three sizes (short, middle, long) and sixteen angles (up and down on the vertical axis [2]; diagonally within these quadrants at 45° [4]; and the bi-section of these angles at 22.5° intervals [8]).

Human motion responses as "gesture," have been used as embodiments of human intuition, sensibility, error, often iconographically opposed to mechanical images or processes. I am interested in being deliberate about this last outpost of human sensibility.

Blythe Bohnen
1975

Selected one-woman exhibitions:
Smith College, Northampton,
Mass. (first) '72; A.I.R.
Gallery, NYC '72, '74; Rhode
Island University, Kingston,
R.I. '73; Henri I, Washington,
D.C. '74.

Selected group exhibitions:
Whitney Museum of American Art,
NYC Annual '71-72; Aldrich
Museum of Contemporary Art,
Ridgefield, Reflections 1971-
72; Kunsthau, Hamburg, Ger-
many American Women Artists '72;
Vassar College Art Gallery,
Poughkeepsie '72; Indianapolis
Museum of Art, Painting and
Sculpture Today '72; Stamford
Museum, The Return to Gesture
'73; New York Cultural Center,
Women Choose Women '73; The
New Gallery, Cleveland, Works
on Paper '73.

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