

bitforms gallery

Rethinking Threads, Beryl Korot

October 20–November 26, 2022

Opening reception: Thursday, October 20, 6–8 PM

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday: 11 AM–6 PM

bitforms gallery is pleased to present *Rethinking Threads*, Beryl Korot's third solo exhibition with the gallery. Recognized as a seminal video artist, Korot's work is celebrated for her application of loom-based programming to the programming of multiple video channels. This structure has allowed her to bring the ancient and modern worlds of technology into conversation as previously exemplified in her multidisciplinary video, drawing, and weaving work *Text and Commentary* (1976). *Rethinking Threads* marks Korot's return to the physical act of weaving last practiced with her handwoven and coded canvases of the 1980s. Here, she prints her own threads constructed without fiber, binding linen tape with taut paper warp threads to replace her loom.

In the early 1970s, Korot referenced the loom as the earliest computer as a result of development in 1804 of the Jacquard loom which used punch cards to program patterns. *Rethinking Threads* traces the evolution of Korot's connection to technology, specifically her consideration of weaving as an early communications tool. Exhibited works draw upon techniques used in painting, printing, and writing, suggesting an interdisciplinary nature beyond the art and craft divide. The artist's thread design process begins with the identification of source material. Once the elements of each thread are conceived, Korot maps their patterns. Each composition is printed, cut, then woven. In standard loom production, the entire structure of the work is considered before completion. In these works, however, Korot inserts individual threads over the gridded surface. This technique allows her to build up the surface of the weavings at any time, thread over thread, like a painter applying more paint. Flexibility as well as portability are important aspects of Korot's practice, stemming from her early involvement in video art with the advent of the battery-powered Sony Portapak. Larger weavings within this exhibition are assembled as a unified whole from six, smaller panels with the introduction of a suture thread that binds the works together. This approach allowed the artist to travel with her work and weave wherever she was, releasing her practice from the boundaries of the studio.

Rethinking Threads mediates the artist's return to previous bodies of work as source material, such as *Babel: The Seven Minute Scroll* (2007), while also introducing new inspirations rooted in the lineage of painting. Korot unifies components of the hand drawn, handmade, and programmed. *Judah's Cuff (after Zurbarán) #2* is a dynamic jewel-tone tapestry. Its surface is flecked with glowing yellow dispersed on a vibrant field of red, a hue Korot transformed from its original source into a richer, more saturated tone. An exhibition of Francisco de Zurbarán's (1598–1664) series *Jacob and His Twelve Sons* (1640–45) greatly inspired this work, urging Korot to examine the opulence within his painted textiles. Canvas itself is a woven material, but the differences between painting and weaving have been greatly gendered throughout art history. Here, Korot reverses this dichotomy, repurposing Golden Age paintings as a material for her own weavings. Details within the series, such as Judah's cuffs and Jacob's turban, become data embedded in thread.

The small Babel weavings exemplify the dialogue between the phonetic, pictographic, and coded language Korot explored in *Babel: The 7 Minute Scroll* (2007). The text itself recounts the Babel story which describes an ancient world where a human-centered worldview develops in opposition to a god-centered one. *Worker, Take a Letter*, and *At the Bend in the River* play with the asymmetry of Korot's threads. Their diverse strands of varying width manifest patterns beyond the grid composition itself. The artist references these instances as artifacts of irregularity. *Warp & Weft*, the drawing series on view, are titled as a reference to the basic vertical and horizontal structure of woven fabric.

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Beryl Korot

b.1945, New York, NY

Lives and works in New York

Beryl Korot is a pioneer of video art, and of multiple channel work in particular. By applying specific structures inherent to loom programming to the programming of multiple channels she brought the ancient and modern worlds of technology into conversation. This extended to a body of work on handwoven canvas in an original language based on the grid structure of woven cloth and to a series of paintings on canvas based on this language. More recently she has created drawings which combine ink, pencil and digitized threads, as well as large scale “tapestries” where threads are printed on paper and woven.

Two early multiple channel works, *Dachau 1974* and *Text and Commentary* have been installed in exhibitions on both the history of video art and textiles. Her works have been seen at the Whitney Museum (1980,1993, 2000, 2002); the Kitchen, New York, NY (1975); Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, NY (1977); Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany (1977); the John Weber Gallery, NYC (1986);The Köln and Düsseldorf Kunstvereins (1989 and 1994); the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, PA (1990); The Reina Sofia, Madrid, (1994); the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2010); bitforms gallery, New York, NY (2012/2018); the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, England (2013); Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany (2013); Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland (2014), The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2014); Tate Modern, London, England (2014); the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH (2015); Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, ICI Project 35, Moscow, Russia (2015/16), SFMOMA, San Francisco, CA (2016), Santa Fe Thoma Art House (2017), LOOP festival, Santa Agata Capella, Barcelona (2017), ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany (2017-18); *Thinking Machines: Art and Design in the Computer Age, 1959–1989* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2017-18). Documenta Politik und Kunst, Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin (2021/22), Core Memory, Newcomb Museum (2022), and Krakow Witkin Gallery Boston, 2022, Albers, Korot Marden, among others.

Two video/music collaborations with Steve Reich—*The Cave* (1993) and *Three Tales* (2002)—brought video installation art into a theatrical context and have been performed worldwide since 1993. Both works continue to be performed and were exhibited as video installations at venues including the Whitney Museum, NYC, NY (1993); the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, (1994); the Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain (1994) , the Kunstverein, Düsseldorf, Germany (1994); Historisches Museum, Frankfurt, Germany (2000), ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany, 2008.

Korot’s work is in both private and public collections including MoMA, NYC, the Kramlich collection’s New Art Trust (shared with Tate Modern, MoMA NYC and SF MoMA), the Sol LeWitt Collection, the Thoma Art Foundation, and others. She is a Guggenheim Fellow, a Montgomery Fellow from Dartmouth College, a recipient of numerous grants from the New York State Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Anonymous Was a Woman.