



Christopher K. Ho, *Robert Morris: Blind Time Drawings*, Haim Chanin Fine Arts, Reviews New York, Modern Painters, Winter 2003, p. 130-131.

**ROBERT MORRIS:  
BLIND TIME DRAWINGS**

Haim Chanin Fine Arts  
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THERE IS A TENDENCY TO approach the lesser-known works of seminal artists through the prism of their better-known ones. In the case of Robert Morris' six series of *Blind Time* drawings, an extremely well selected sample of which are on view at Haim Chanin Fine Arts, this tendency is apposite but fortunately falls short of being just. The fifteen drawings featured easily



stand their ground in comparison to Morris' more famous works.

In series I (1973), III (1985), IV (1991), V (1999) and VI (2001), Morris, following a predetermined set of guidelines, covered his hands with graphite, sometimes mixed with oil or ink, and, with eyes closed, alternately spread, smeared, pressed and rubbed it into paper. In series II (1976), the artist gave verbal instructions to a thirty-year-old woman who had been blind from birth and known to us only by the initials A A, who adhered to a similar procedure. Texts by the drawings record the method of their making as well as the difference between the estimated and actual amount of time used: 'With the eyes closed the ten fingers move outward from the centre making counting strokes,' states the accompanying text to *Blind Time I* (1973), a densely layered field of curt vertical marks. 'Two thousand strokes are made in an estimated two minutes. Time estimation error: +45 seconds.'

The atmospheric, landscape-like graphite marks, then, are about process as well as product, a concern perhaps best captured in and certainly best known through Morris' piece *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (1961), a work comprised of a wooden cube containing a recording of sounds from the box's own three-and-a-half-hour-long construction.

The *Blind Time* drawings' quirky 'time estimation error' notation takes as its precedent another of the artist's works, *L-Beams* (1965), an arrangement of three human-scale L-shaped objects. A signal work of minimalism, the object's configurations change depending on the position of the beholder, forcing a comparison between their ideal and

perceived shapes. The *Blind Time* drawings accent a similar disjunction between estimated and actual times, a disjunction also highlighted through the juxtaposition of intention (as described by the texts) and result (as manifest in the drawings).

If the *Blind Time* drawings share concerns with Morris' earlier three-dimensional work (which are well articulated in the artists' copious writings) the selection here suggests that they are by no means adjunct to them. Their conceptual eloquence is matched by a consistent formal elegance: circling plumes of black, bilaterally symmetrical areas creasing outwards, a persistent grey middle ground. It is this formal coherency - sustained even while specific works refer to topics as disparate as the philosopher Donald Davidson (series IV), Dürer's sixteenth-century etching *Melancholia I* (series V) and the crassness of consumer culture (series VI) - that pushes this exhibition beyond being a tribute to one of the most influential artists of the postwar period and towards being a further step in achieving a nuanced understanding of that artist. CH