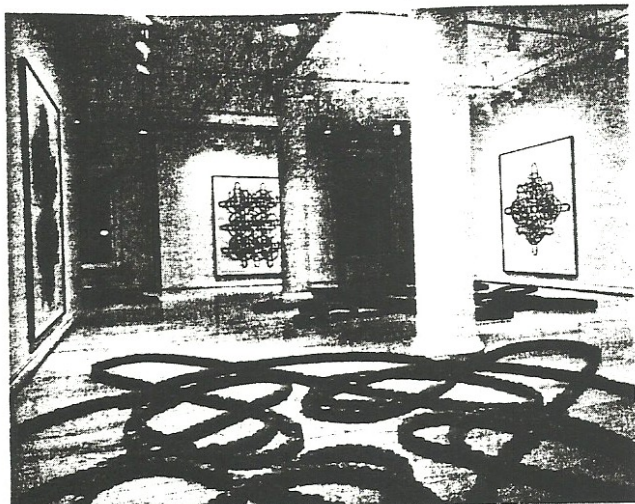


ARTFORUM

SUMMER 1995



Robin Hill, *Untitled*, 1995, plaster and paint. Installation view.

ROBIN HILL

LENNON, WEINBERG

For this exhibition of new sculptures and drawings, Robin Hill made four thousand casts of paper cups and dyed them ballpoint-pen blue. Unlike Bruce Nauman's cast of the underside of a chair, Hill's casts make no attempt to evoke the thing itself through its negative; rather, they chart an open territory. Lined up to create patterns that wheel and spin across the floor, Hill's uniform units suggest a gargantuan spirograph. There were three sculptures formed from lots of casts, all untitled, taking over most of the floor space. These sculptures were all quite gracious—lots of floor shone through—and when they ran into a wall or column, they broke politely, as if in deference to the permanent structures. One sculpture came up against a radiator but was stubby enough to continue its spirited march beneath it.

Mapping out the movements and forms within these sculptures were five monumental drawings in blue oil-stick on wax-saturated paper. Because they are based on a complexly rotated line—somewhat like an unbent paperclip—that pivots around various invisible points, these works provide a clue to the structure of Hill's sculptural work. Hill's quasicalligraphic mark takes on a very different character in each drawing, depending on the proximity and density of the points through which it meanders. One mark is as compact and curly as a poodle in full coif, others read like plans for fanciful belvederes.

Collectively these images establish the start of a seemingly unlimited systemic art. For an artist whose previous works consisted of freestanding, podlike forms made of wax, this recent show clearly marked a turning point. While the temptation might be to liken the patterns Hill creates to mandalas, such an association seems to bypass the more mundane, and ultimately more likely, sources for these configurations, such as engineering blueprints, cloverleaf intersections, or Etch-A-Sketch doodles. While such connections may be less than spiritual, they seem more in keeping with the sculptures' industrious temporal and spatial operations.

The single cyanotype print in the show reinforced such a reading. An early form of photography, cyanotypes are typically characterized by a white image with a blue middletone, precisely the tonal relationship that structures Hill's sculptures and drawings. By incorporating a form historically used for botanical studies, such as those that fill Anna Atkins' 19th-century album, Hill suggests that her work might also have an empirical origin. In the print shown here, it looks as if Hill's familiar forms have been X-rayed to reveal the axial skeleton of some organism, or the molecular structure of a particular substance.

—Ingrid Schaffner